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THE
STORY OF JOB.



REV. A. C. THISELTON.



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THE STORY OF JOB.



THE STORY OF JOB:

AND

MEDITATIONS ON PASSAGES OF THE BOOK OF JOB.

BY

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INTRODUCTION.

I WAS led some time ago to address a beloved flock on what I called "OVERLOOKED TRUTHS; or, Friendly Words on Subjects or Aspects of Truths sometimes Overlooked by the Lord's People."* I am now induced to go further and offer to the same beloved flock, and to all who will permit me to address them, some thoughts on a Book of Holy Scripture, which I think has not its right place in the readings and reflections of God's children. I mean the Book of Job. May the Holy Ghost bless these humble words of one of the least in the Father's house, to the comfort of many in our Bochim. The more I know of the world, the more certain I am that it is a vale of tears, and therefore the more sure I am that the ministry which I have received of the Lord ought to be often directed to those who, like Job, are in distress of mind, body, or estate. Of old the prophet was told to comfort God's people, and speak

* London : J. Nisbet & Co. Dublin : G. Herbert, and J. Robertson.

comfortably unto Jerusalem; and in gospel times our Lord told Peter to shepherd and feed His sheep and lambs. In the following pages it will, I hope, be seen that my object especially is to "feed the flock of slaughter," (Zech. xi. 4, 7,) to comfort the feeble-minded, and support the weak.

Whilst, however, seeking to cheer and edify God's people, I trust I have not forgotten those who have not yet received Christ to their great and endless comfort. I like to remember the words, "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight," and apply them to myself, lest in the ministry of the word I overlook "*the eighth*." Having endeavoured to keep this direction in mind I now bow my knee unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would vouchsafe to bless the perusal of these few pages to the reader, and to HIM shall be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

A. C. T.

PARSONAGE, UPPER BAGGOT STREET,
DUBLIN, November 8, 1870.

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THE STORY OF JOB.

I.

SATAN'S PROBLEM.

"Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?"—JOB i. 9.

THERE is very much that is instructive in the story of Job. By what human author it was written we do not know, but coming to us anonymously, we may the better feel that it belongs to no one man, and that it expresses the griefs and problems which have stirred the hearts of thousands of every age. Sufficient is it for us to know that it is given by inspiration of God, and written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.

After careful and prayerful reading and thought upon this Scripture, I have determined to offer

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some reflections upon it, which, by the help of the Holy Spirit, may prove profitable. I think that, considering the Book of Job is one of the longest in the Bible, it is to be wondered that so little is said and written upon it. It is possible that its having been omitted from our Sunday lessons has tended to keep it somewhat from its right place in the instructions of the pulpit. Moreover, it is only when one searches into it that it is found to preach Christ and reveal the Gospel.

I believe it to have been Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Love, that has provided for the many children of Bochim such a manual for the afflicted in mind, body, or estate. May He Who is Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Love, vouchsafe to us the light of His Holy Spirit, that we may derive true profit from a consideration of some of its leading features.

I. In considering the general scope of this Divine Book, let us first notice how it answers a question which is constantly being raised by humanity. The problem of the book is, "*Doth Job fear God for nothing?*"—A problem which cannot be tried abstractedly but in a case. This case exhibits the temptation of the righteous patriarch. The book sets before us the tempter and the tempted, and we are told that the afflictions of Job were sent upon him to test his real state before God. The adversary had said, that if Job received nothing from God, *he would surely renounce God*. So his state was

to be put to the trial, that it might be seen whether his religion was selfish or not. And you may be sure that the question, *Doth Job fear God for nought?* with the alteration of the name, is being constantly put by the enemy of souls. "Doth such an one serve God *gratis*? Is he not a mere hireling? Is not his piety a mercenary service?"

Frequently it has to be owned that the apparent religion in the world is the result of circumstances. Our blessed Lord has told us of those who receive the word with joy, and last for a while, but when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, they are offended. Do *these* serve God for nought?

There are also those who are religiously brought up, and they like to please their pious friends. Like Jehoaash, they do that which is right in the sight of the Lord all the days wherein Jehoiada instructs them. (2 Kings xii. 2.) Do *these* serve God for nought? Even Herod did many things, and heard John gladly.

But in the case before us, the great adversary is speaking of the servant of the Lord, "Doth Job fear God for nought?" He suggests what is true, that it was Job's interest to serve God, but insinuates what is false, that he had no higher motive.

True piety will flourish in poverty as in wealth, on a bed of suffering as well as in vigorous health, when we are despised and calumniated for our attachment to it, as well as when the incense of

flattery is burnt around us; nay, more, God hath especially chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom.

Now, then, for the answer to the Accuser's question,—Doth Job fear God for nought? The Lord permitted Satan to afflict His servant, and this he did to the utmost of his power. We are shown the very rich Emir experiencing a sudden very great reverse of fortune, his property destroyed, his servants killed, his family buried in the ruins of the festive hall; but all this does not shake the faith of the tempted saint. His words are, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

But *again*, he is subject to the malevolent detractions of the Adversary. Now he is charged, not merely with irreligion, but inhumanity. "Job" (insinuated the enemy of souls) "did but care for himself. He cared not for his family, their loss would not be any great trial; but touch his own bone and flesh, and he would curse God to His face." It was in every way a truly Satanic challenge. The Infinite in Wisdom, however, permits the Accuser to tempt His servant Job yet further. This time, he is made to suffer personally. A loathsome disease soon prostrates him to the earth, and he becomes an object of abhorrence even to his own friends. It is probable that the disease was a species of black leprosy, called *Elephantiasis* from *the swelling produced* by it, resembling the limbs

of the elephant. Leprosy in all its forms was considered contagious, and, of course, in Job's case, involved the necessity of separation from society. How deeply humbling to a man in the former rank and dignity of this eastern Emir! No more pitiable sight can be conceived than this good man fallen from his former greatness, sitting solitarily upon the ground, friendless and homeless, scraping his sores with a potsherd. Still, his integrity is preserved, and his piety is proved sincere, and it is seen that the just can live *by faith*. The best man on the earth is made the most miserable, but like the palm of his own Arabia, under the pressure of heavy weights, the branches of his moral stature shot upward through an inner spring of vitality and elasticity, and his roots were wrapped the closer around the Rock of Ages. "*Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?*" Such was his answer when his wife bade him renounce God and die.

But now comes a *third* temptation; it is different to the others. The enemy of souls leaves no place untried that may induce apostasy. Look at his subtle temptation of the first Adam, or his three temptations of the second Adam, or at these three temptations of Job, and you will see with what cunning craftiness he lieth in wait to deceive. Be not ignorant of Satan's devices.

Now a mighty mental conflict shakes the confidence of the afflicted saint, but it is only as the dis-

turbance of the compass-needle in the storm, which eventually returns to its pole where only it is at rest. It is the view taken of his trial by his three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, which makes the third temptation so bitter. Those friends were men of piety, but their views of affliction were very erroneous. They said that great sufferers must have been great sinners, as they thought suffering was the immediate effect of the sin of the immediate sufferer. In this Job was deeply and sorely exercised, but he showed that the righteous are often oppressed and the wicked for a time triumphant, and though now and then a shadow came over his soul—an earth-born cloud arose to hide his Redeemer from his eyes—though now and then there was an eclipse of faith, and an eclipse of hope, and an eclipse of love, it was not *total*, and it was not for long, and from out of darkness and perturbation of spirit as dreadful as ever the arch enemy cast over a soul, he cried, "Though God slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

Thus then the leading problem of the book is answered. The slanderous accusations which had been hurled against Job were refuted. Job's faith in God was put to the test, and it stood the test, as did Abraham's. Job did *not* serve God for what he could get by the service, but because he loved the service and loved God. And when the impossibility of removing him from his integrity became evident *to the eyes of all*, then God gave to him twice as

much as he had before, and blessed his latter end more than his beginning. Therefore although the book opens as if Satan's ends were too much permitted, it closes by showing us "the end of the Lord." "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy."*

Dear brethren, *we* are on our trial. Satan desires to have us. He is the Accuser, ever asking with the most malevolent designs, "Doth this one or that one fear God for nought?" If he cannot find fault with our outward walk and service he impugns the inner principles and motives, and, if it were possible, would overthrow the very elect. Look at Job's temptations, and see what a mighty adversary stands to prevent our ever entering heaven. Edom's going forth to oppose Israel's march to the land of Canaan was as nothing compared with the great adversary, who disputes every inch of progress that the child of God makes in leaving the city of destruction for that which hath eternal and God-laid foundations.

Our great allegorist went not too far when he described Apollyon withstanding Christian in the king's highway of holiness. He pictured him straddling quite over the whole breadth of the way and exclaiming in awful rage, "I swear by my infernal den that thou shalt go no further; here will I spill thy soul."

The Book of Job shows us that our great adversary

* See an excellent article on Job in the "Imperial Dictionary."

will stop at nothing to accomplish his end. He who accuseth the brethren day and night will not cease to ask, "Doth that one or this one serve God for nought?" We must expect many ordeals, and it behoves all who have counted the cost and joined themselves unto the Lord, to be very sober and vigilant, for if they are not most vigilant, Satan will be more than a match for them.

"In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle,
Be a hero in the strife."

II. The progressive solution of the problem of the book, *Doth Job fear God for nought?* exhibits very clearly what I must, in the second place, dwell upon, that the just shall live by his faith—not by his sight—not by his senses—but by *faith*—faith in God.

Whilst Job, whose possessions were worth at least a hundred thousand pounds of our money, had his happy family around him, and enjoyed health, and strength, and fame, and honour, it might have been thought that he lived by sense, and if Simon Magus had lived in his day he would have thought it a good investment to have purchased the Holy Ghost with money. But when the holy man was stripped of possessions, and family, and health, and honour, no one could say that he was religious for what he could get. If only in this world he had hope he

would have been of all men most miserable. But the just shall live by faith. And in Job, amongst false brethren, destitute, afflicted, tormented with trials of cruel mockings, we see the triumph of faith, we see the obtaining of a better resurrection, we see a man who received not the promise, but who having secured a good report through faith, could commit himself to Him who judgeth righteously.

It was a great victory, and in mercy God has chronicled it for our good. Sometimes darkness comes over us, and we ask, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" God has *not* forgotten. He waits to be gracious. Therefore when we cannot pray in the light we should pray in the dark. Hear what God says, (Isa. li. 10), "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." Let him *trust*. Thus Habakkuk trusted when he contemplated loss upon loss, and trial upon trial, "*Yet* I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Thus, too, David trusted. We read that when in his deep distress the fickle people spoke of stoning him, David "encouraged himself in the Lord."

This may show us how truly faith worketh by love. St. Paul said, "With the heart—not the head—with the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness." Faith is the reliance of the heart on God. True faith is therefore loving. It finds happy rest

in God Himself. "I am poor and needy, but the Lord careth for me," or, as the margin puts it, "beareth me on His heart." The darkness and the light are both alike to God. It may be a season of darkness with the saint, but as in the darkness the child's hold of the parent is made surer, or as in the tempest the limpet cleaves the more tightly to the rock, and the oak sends its roots firmer in the ground, so it should be in the Christian's cloudy and dark night of adversity. "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." *That* was the expression of Job's loving trust. "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?" *That* was the expression of Job's loving trust. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust Him." Oh, what mighty and victorious faith! Talk you of the night-scented stock and the night-flowering cactus? talk you of the sweet song of the nightingale? talk you of the solemn grandeur of the midnight sky? talk you of the majesty of the rolling ocean waves when the sun is gone and the pale moonlight gives a beauty which in the day-time is never revealed? Look at Job in adversity, *trusting in the Lord*; there you have a spectacle for men and angels, there you have what is more truly beautiful than anything in nature, there you have a glimpse of one of the beauties of holiness ever pleasing to the eye of God.

Afflicted ones, bereaved ones, poor ones, sick ones, tempted ones,—*trust—trust—trust*; yea, trust when you cannot trace, trust when you cannot explain; when you cannot understand, when you cannot argue, when you cannot speak, when you can only mourn and weep—*trust—trust*.

When the disciples would have silenced the Syrophœnician woman, she went on *trusting*; when some would have turned blind Bartimæus away, he went on *trusting*; when Job's own wife became his temptress, he went on *trusting*. Beloved brethren, who are passing through the darkness of affliction, have faith in God. The just shall live by faith. Patient faith waits the time when the aloe shall put forth its blossoms, the promised glory of a hundred summers. It is good to wait with Job and patiently hope for the salvation of God, taking up the language of the patriarch so full of happy confidence and rest, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another."

Thus far I have shown you that the great problem raised by Satan, "*Doth Job fear God for nought?*" is answered by the victorious manner in which the sorely tempted Job came out of his uncommonly great trials, and in following the successive steps by

which the question was settled we have seen an illustration of the doctrine laid down by the inspired Habakkuk, and so often dwelt upon and unfolded by the inspired Paul, "The just shall live by faith."

II.

THE MYSTERY OF HUMAN SUFFERING, AND THE TRIUMPH OF PATIENCE.

"Behold we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord ; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."—St. JAMES v. 11.

"All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come."—JOB xiv. 14.

WE have considered what is the great problem of the Book of Job, and seen how the progressive solution of this problem, *Doth Job fear God for nought?* exhibits to our view an illustration of the important Bible doctrine, "*The just shall live by his faith.*"

I proceed to notice that the book throws much light upon the mystery of human suffering. For the *full* light we must wait for the glory to be revealed in us. What a world of sorrow this is ! Who can give to others' woes his sigh, without feeling his own will need it next ? The more we know of one another's hearts, so much the more we

learn of the vastness of that number who with distressed David dwell in Mesech and have their habitation amongst the tents of Kedar, or with captive Israel sit down weeping under the willows of Babylon.

Our book shows us Satan daring to tempt God to be the author of human misery. "Put forth thy hand and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." God's answer shows that the sufferings of the godly are *permitted* by the Lord, but not inflicted by Him. It is revealed to us that these afflictions are the effect of Satan's malice, in order that such as Job may fall; and they are permitted by Divine love, in order that such as Job may rise triumphantly. Whatever evil happens to men is not directly *from* God but it is not *without* God. Satan is the *author* of all evil. God permits evil that He may overrule it for good. God is the God of the afflicted, but when He is about to stamp the coin with the heavenly die, He puts it back into the furnace, for this is absolutely necessary. The melting and remelting of the gold make it malleable and capable of receiving the indelible impression. Thus the Infinitely Wise uses even Satan as His instrument.

And Job understood this in part. He said not, "The Lord gave and the devil hath taken away," but "*The Lord* hath taken away." Satan is the author of evil, but he could not have inflicted *sorrows upon Job* without God's permission. He

could not bring a sparrow to the ground without God's permission.

Our blessed Lord Jesus sets this truth before us in St. Luke xxii. 31 : "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." The adversary we know received *permission* to sift Job as wheat. Satan cannot do anything to God's children without asking leave. In the Christless soul he can go in and out of his own pleasure, but Job could have said to him, "Thou canst have no power against me except it be given thee from above." In war times, the parts of this country that might have been invaded were surrounded by watch-towers, upon which watchmen were ever on the look-out for the enemy, and were ever ready to give warning at the first appearance of the white sail over the bosom of the deep. It was so arranged that every tower was in view of two others, one to the right hand and the other to the left, so that at any moment a signal could be most rapidly sent all round the coast. But Jesus the Keeper of Israel is better than all watchmen. His eye never sleeps. What was true of Job, and true of Simon Peter, is true of every disciple, however ignorant (and Job was very ignorant), and however frail (and Peter was one of the most *fallible* of Christians), Jesus *prays* for him. He ever liveth to make intercession for us : "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have *prayed* for you."

This will show how false were some of the con-

clusions of Job's friends. Remember, they said, "who ever perished being innocent? Or when were the righteous cut off? Is not thy wickedness great?" Job protests against such cruel insinuations, and declares that often "the tabernacles of the robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure." The fallacious statements of his friends would, if true, prove Abel to be the sinner, and Cain the saint, and the whole noble army of martyrs amongst the worst of men, and their well-to-do persecutors amongst the best. Such false views would tend also to weaken men's faith in a future state, and the great day of God's reckoning.

But what is the fact? God's people are commonly the most tried and afflicted. In great battles, the cruel command has been given to aim chiefly at the officers. The Christian is like the king of Israel in the battle. The Syrian monarch's orders were "Fight ye not with small or great, but only with the King of Israel." So Satan has commanded all his angels, "Fight not against small or great, but only with the Christians. Aim your darts against the servants of the Most High God."

Job's three friends were representative men. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, have put forth their false reasoning in *every* age. You have a form of this in the pious David's envy at the prosperity of the wicked; you see it in another form when the Maltese barbarians supposed Paul was a murderer *because a viper* had fastened itself on his arm; you

see it in those who came to Jesus and told Him of certain Galileans whose blood [probably in some riot in the temple] Pilate had mingled with the Jewish sacrifices. Why! was not Christ Himself a Galilean, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, a sacrifice for the people? In every age, then, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, have been ready to assert, "the worse the affliction, the more deserved." Oh, what wretched physicians! what miserable comforters! To any such Job might answer as Elijah answered Ahab when he said, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" *"I have not troubled Israel, but thou—thou false reasoner—thou hast troubled Israel."*

The idea that afflictions are a judgment from God would make the Divine Providence to be, instead of a great deep, a very shallow pool. A child could understand God's providence if accidents and losses were punishments. But the Scriptural idea of God's providence is a "great deep." Even the prophet Ezekiel, when he beheld the wheels which were the great picture of the providence of God, could only say, that the wheels were so high that they were terrible, and were full of eyes, so that he cried "*Oh, wheel!*" If every calamity were the result of some sin, providence would be very simple. But the Word of God sets providence before us as a great depth, and frequently we can only cry with the captive by the river Chebar, "*Oh, wheel!*"

Why God permits His own people to be especially

afflicted, is proof that this life is only disciplinary, and the threshold of another and a better. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." Satan is often permitted to try the child of God, but we see that it is ever within limits appointed by the Father, and what the enemy means for harm shall in the end be found to work for good. God deals with us as sons, He is never as a foolish schoolmaster flogging the wrong child. You may have stood at the pillar-post and seen the letters put in seeming confusion into the post-bag, but every letter has its special address upon it, and in due time will be delivered into the proper hands. And so the providences of God may appear crowded and confused, but each has its own message, and each a purpose to fulfil. Satan's harassings cannot extend in the least beyond the line that God permits, and by and by the very hardships of Job are seen as the well arranged setting of the opal which glances with strange interior fires. God orders all things well. He may not give account of His matters, but having given us His precious Son Jesus Christ, He will not withhold any good thing. And as to the sorrows which must and *will* befall, we may be sure that in all these believers are "more than conquerors."

"The weapons of evil are turned against itself, fighting under better banners !

"The leech delighteth in stinging, and the wicked loveth to do *harm*.

"But the wise Physician of the Universe useth that ill tendency for health."

Thus the Book of Job sheds light upon the mystery of human suffering.

Do I address any who have been suspecting God's providence, because they have seemed, like Job, set up as a target to be shot at? Let every trusting soul be sure that no weapon formed against him shall prosper. Job once felt as you feel. But "the end of the Lord," shows that all his bitter trials were permitted for a lovingly wise purpose, so that he could say, "When I am tried I shall come forth as gold." When Daniel knew that the den of lions would be his destiny if he prayed, he knelt down as before, not doubting the providence of God. When Joshua and Caleb saw the people were enraged and going to stone them for the report of Canaan, their faith in God's providence did not waver, "*Let us go up and possess the land.*" When Captain Allen Gardiner found his comrades dead from starvation and himself dying, he had no hard thoughts of God's providence. He pencilled on a piece of paper these words,—“My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from Him. He only is my Rock and my salvation: He is my defence: I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory: the Rock of my strength, and my Refuge is in God. Trust in Him at all times, ye people, pour out your heart before Him, God is a Refuge for us.” (Ps. lxxii. 5-8.)

My friends, let us for ever get rid of all hard thoughts of God's dealings. Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you, but rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

In the next place one may view the Book of Job as setting before us *the triumph of patience*. The chief design of the Epistle of James is to commend the grace of patience. It begins with these words: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." You will observe that he speaks of patience as the crowning ripeness of the Christian character. It is complete surrender to God. It is lying passive in God's hands. Patience is power. Patience is victory. Patience is truly godly. God is the God of patience. He waits to be gracious. He is long-suffering. He endures the manners of sinners in the wilderness for many a year. Christians are called to be like God. "Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." In the fifth chapter of the epistle, the apostle instances three different degrees of this grace. In verse 7 the lowest degree—*perseverance*, "Wait, brethren, until the coming of the

Lord." To this form of patience is applied the similitude of the husbandman's waiting for the precious fruits of the earth. In verse 10 a higher degree of patience is referred to—*long-suffering*. Take the prophets for an example of long-suffering affliction, or rather pain. In verse 11 (our text) we have the highest degree of patience. Behold, we count them happy, not that wait, not that suffer, but that *endure*. The world counts them miserable and unfortunate, but we count them happy which endure. "Ye have heard of the patience of *Job*, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy."

Ye have heard of Job's patience. We are too apt to fall into the fault of his three friends, and notice chiefly his *impatience* and other shortcomings. We remember that he cursed the day of his birth and otherwise spoke unadvisedly with his lips, but so did the prophet Jeremiah. Job's failing is not referred to by James, as in Hebrews there is no mention of Rahab's lie, but only of her faith. "Ye have heard of *the patience* of Job, and seen the *end* of the Lord." Here we have it clearly admitted that no affliction for the *present* is joyous but grievous. But we are to rejoice that tribulation worketh patience, and patience, experience, and experience, hope. It is wrong to judge of affliction by the present sense. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and seen *the end* of the Lord." Wait for the

end. The beginning is usually Satan's, the end is the Lord's. "I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit." (Isa. xlviii. 17.)

In connection with this triumph of patience read what Job says in chapter xiv, verse 14, "If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." This was the patience of Job. He would wait all the days. When Jesus said to the Church of Smyrna, "Ye shall have tribulation ten days," whether you take the days as literal days or as years it means an "appointed time." The tribulation was predetermined and would last not a minute longer than was fixed by the Lord God. So Job's tribulation had its boundaries, and the suffering saint cried, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." My brethren, can we take up these words of the patient Job? *Many* may be my days, but all of them will I wait. *Varied* may be my days, but all of them will I wait. *Dark* may be my days. *Sorrowful*, increasingly sorrowful, and *lonely* may be my days; *full of bitter anguish* may be my days, but all of them will I wait. And why? *Why* should the Christian be ready to wait all these days? Because they are heaven-appointed days, they are well-ordered days, they are lovingly-ordered days, they are wisely-ordered days. They are the times appointed of the Father. God who *appoints His people's bounds and habitation, appoints His people's days and nights, and knows how*

many to make bright and prosperous, and how many to make cloudy and dark.

There is great heaven-taught wisdom in this determined resolve of the patient Job. If any of us lack this wisdom, let us ask it of God who giveth to all askers liberally. Jacob waited long for Rachel. David waited long after his anointing for his coronation as king, and the Christian ought to be willing to wait the appointed time of his entering upon the glories prepared for him before the foundation of the world.

I will wait, said Job, till my change come. It is the language of a heart which knows in whom it has trusted. When the final change comes to some, it is a change from woe to woe, misery to misery, death to death, from one degree of sorrow to another *that cannot be told!* The change which passes over the true believer is a blessed one indeed. Job, patient Job, knew in the midst of his griefs that his change was worth thinking of and longing for, and yet one for which he would wait God's own time. God's time is best. Jesus knew when and how Peter was to depart this life (St. John xxi. 18), and that is recorded for all to remember. He always orders for the best, therefore Job wisely said, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." "*My change.*" *My change—Job's*—suffering Job's—a change from the dunghill to the throne, from suffering and want to a state of endless felicity.

Oh, may the Lord the Spirit direct our hearts (they need directing) into the *patient* waiting for Christ. Be patient, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Every one who has ardently longed for any spiritual blessing knows the temptation to impatience in expecting it. Good men like Elijah have sickened over the degeneracy of their times, and cried from the depth of their hearts, "Where is the promise of his coming?" But it is good to wait and patiently hope for the salvation of God.

Under the most trying afflictions the patience of the holy Job triumphed. What, my friends, do we know of the triumphs of this grace? It is by patience that we possess our souls. It is by patience we learn that afflictions are not "strange things"—they are not mistakes in treatment—they go to make up the discipline of unerring Love and Power—they are sorrows that shall be turned into joy. Let us beware then of murmuring at afflictions, for they are disguised mercies. "If thou faint in the day of adversity thy strength is small."

As a closing word let me call your attention to the words of the Holy Ghost in Hebrews x. 36. "Ye have need of *patience*, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no *pleasure in him*. But we (can we say we?) are not

of them who draw back unto perdition ; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

Now to the God of patience, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

III.

JOB AS A PRIEST, AND JOB IN HIS TYPICAL CHARACTER.

“Go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering ; and my servant Job shall pray for you : for him will I accept : lest I deal with you after your folly.”—JOB xlii. 8.

It will be instructive for us to view Job as a priest as some of us may not have done so before, and then in what little time remains to us we may view him in his typical character.

Job as a Priest.

In chapter i. we see him acting as priest of his family, offering burnt offerings according to the number of his children. “This did Job continually.”

You must remember that the patriarch was independent of the Abrahamic dispensation. He was much like Melchisedek priest of the most High God. Job was a Gentile, deriving his knowledge of *Divine things* from Noah's descendants. He lived *before false religion* prevailed amongst all who were

not of Israel. God had a people before He called Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees. He had those who had preserved among them the light and knowledge of the Noachic dispensation. It is impossible to say to what extent vital godliness flourished between the times of Noah and Abraham, and it is equally impossible to say to what extent subsequently to Abraham, vital godliness existed distinct from Judaism, though parallel with it, running down the ages like the two great affluents of the river Nile, the White and Blue rivers, preserving their characters distinct though flowing together side by side.

Job lived in a period in the Church's history when her order and strength were not recorded on earth. It is likely that in his time the first-born and head of the family usually discharged the functions of priesthood. This we find in the account of Abraham to have been the practice. To him Isaac succeeded, and it seemed to have been supposed, as a matter of course, that his first-born, Esau, would have succeeded to the same functions. But he was *supplanted*.

When you read in Gen. xxvii. of Jacob coming to his father in the goodly raiment of his brother, the meaning is, *the* robes of the heir to the patriarchal priesthood. "Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son," literally, *the desirable* (that is, beautiful) *garments of Esau her eldest son*. They were the *robes of desire*, and, as we find in verse 27, *had a*

fragrant perfume. To the one who had the rights of primogeniture was given the honour of priesthood.

This will help to explain the deadly jealousy of Joseph's brethren. In Gen. xxxvii. we read of Israel loving Joseph more than all his children; and he *made him a coat of many colours*, or pieces. ("A tunic with fringes.") This robe perhaps excited the jealousy of his brethren, as showing that their father designed Joseph for the priesthood of the family, and, therefore, it was an evidence of his advancement to the right of primogeniture. Reuben was the first-born, and therefore had a claim to the priesthood, but this he forfeited, and in 1 Chron. v. 2, we read, "*the birthright was Joseph's.*" Job then is introduced to us at the beginning of the book as the priest of his family, and offering sacrifices on their behalf. "This did Job continually."

But at the end of the book we see His sacerdotal functions greatly extended. By the Lord's direction his three friends were to come to him with offerings that he might make atonement for them. Chapter xlii. 8, 9, "Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job. So Eliphaz the Temanite and *Bildad the Shuhite* and Zophar the Naamathite

went, and did according as the Lord commanded them : the Lord also accepted Job."

In the sevenfold offering which the friends were to bring to Job, we recognise the established rite of the patriarchal Church—"the sevenfold sacrifice," a custom still retained in the age of the apostate Balaam, for Balaam belonged to the same dispensation. And in this appointment of Job, we see how dear to the Lord is a child whom He has lately afflicted. Now that he is humbled under the mighty hand of God, how highly is he exalted. Job had proved himself a great spiritual wrestler, and now God delighted to honour him. He had wrestled first with Satan, and next with God Himself—first with the evil one, and next with the Holy One—first with the prince of darkness, and next with the Light of Life! He began by the experience described in Eph. vi, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." He ended by a struggle analogous to that of Jacob's. When of old the Angel Jehovah wrestled with Jacob, that patriarch refused to interpret the wrestling as in itself an evidence that he had no standing as a man justified and accepted in God's sight. So Job. He combated the arguments of his friends, by calling in question their fundamental principle that every man is treated in this world according to his particular deserts, and that *gain* is literally godliness.

He refused to let the Lord's dealing with him overthrow his confidence. Even when God seemed rushing upon him as an antagonist he maintained his ground. He would not be beaten down. He had not been false in serving God, and he was certain that God continued faithful. "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." In wrestling with God he had planted his foot upon a rock and refused to abandon his position. And that was right. It would not have been right to take the place his friends advised, and consent to consider himself a castaway. God is never pleased with false and unbelieving abjectness of soul. There was, however, this defect in Job's attitude; he had been justifying himself rather than God; he had been dwelling too much on the false charges of his three friends, and so setting himself right, whereas before a heart-searching God when we have done all we must say, "We are unprofitable servants."

The Lord put an end to the conflict by spiritually touching the hollow of Job's thigh, and Job, like another Jacob, halted on his thigh, nevertheless he had power with God and prevailed.

Oh, for such a view of God that we may ever say with St. Paul, I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified, that is, I am conscious to myself of no delinquency, but I am not hereby justified. (It is not *this* circumstance which clears me of blame, this does not decide the matter.) *Paul's heart* condemned him not, and this gave him

confidence towards God. *We want more Christians like Paul and Job.*

Look at the honour which the Lord conferred upon His servant Job. He who had offered sacrifices on behalf of his own children, is now appointed to offer them on behalf of his friends. A very distinguished privilege. He stands up an expiatory priest before the Lord, and is directed to be a praying mediator on behalf of those who had dealt so unkindly. In the midst of the sacrifices of the seven bullocks and seven rams he lifts up his hands as a powerful intercessor. ["My servant Job shall pray for you, him will I accept."] He prays for those who had despitefully used him, and it is most probable that as a result fire from heaven descends upon the sacrifices in token of the Divine acceptance.

Thus we see that the great afflictions through which Job was permitted to pass, prepared him to fill the highest station that could possibly be held in the Church of God. In days of only dim light and imperfect vision, he was raised up to be a faithful priest and a powerful intercessor, and the mention of his advocacy by the spirit of prophecy warrants us to form a high opinion of his subsequent ministry to the remnant of the patriarchal Church.

In the fourteenth chapter of Ezekiel God threatens Israel with an irrevocable sentence of famine in the land, and says, "Though these three men were in it, Noah, Daniel, and Job, they should deliver but

their own souls by their righteousness." Next He threatens to send noisome beasts through the land, and says, "Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only shall be delivered." Next He threatens to bring the sword upon the land, and says, "Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they only shall be delivered themselves." And once again God threatens to send pestilence into the land, and says, "Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness."

Here we have Job joined with Noah and Daniel by the word of God, as the three intercessors whose persons God had most accepted in their respective generations. *Noah*, we know was a priest and ambassador to two worlds. The reference to his successful advocacy, however, must apply to his ministry after the deluge. It is likely that when he was in the ark he regretted that he had not prayed more, that his heart had not oftener glowed with intercessions. But when he came forth from the ark the first thing he did was to offer sacrifice, and we may say that its sweet-smelling savour produced effects which the world feels to this day.

With *Daniel's* history we are better acquainted, and we have only to read it carefully to see how *constant and mighty* an intercessor he was. It was

when the spirit of supplication was poured out upon Daniel that God was pleased to reveal the speedy termination of the captivity of the visible Church.

Job then stands forth in the inspired word as (so to speak) one of three whose intercession would avail if that of any three human beings could. But remember St. John's words, "There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it." There are times still when the irrevocable sentence has gone forth from the holy God, and then though these three individuals, all eminently distinguished for their personal righteousness, were to intercede, they could but deliver their own souls. How true is this of that day when it shall be said, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." That is—*time for change is gone*—Daniel's supplication for the people of the land is no longer to prevail; Noah's character will not suffice to secure a place in the ark for his sons and daughters; Job's holy and priestly intercession over the sevenfold sacrifice, on behalf of his friends, is unavailing.

How should every one of us without delay lay hold of eternal life offered to us by the Friend of Sinners, Who came to seek and save the lost! "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven whereby we may be saved." Think not that the name of a pious parent

or holy friend will avail anything. It will but add to the condemnation of the lost, that they either bore the name of the godly, or had for their friend a man mighty in prayer as Job was. Unless Christ's precious blood be on our souls, and unless Christ's precious name be on our foreheads, we cannot be saved. "*Christ* we preach—Christ crucified, Christ ascended—warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in (not Job—not Daniel) CHRIST JESUS."

He that hath God's Son hath life. He that hath not the Son [although he may seem to have many things] hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.

We may now look at Job as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You have noticed how unlike a shadow is to that of which it is the shadow. There are *resemblances* which enable you to say what it is the shadow of, but there are many differences which make it a very imperfect representation. It must be ever so with all the types of Christ. Yet these types were necessary to render the earlier dispensations thoroughly preparative in respect to the coming dispensation of the Gospel.

Job was an imperfect type of the suffering Jesus, nevertheless a type truly necessary to prepare for the fulness of Gospel times. If the Jew was to accept a Messiah who was to lead a life of sorrow and abasement, and to be crucified, it was neces-

sary that he should somewhere or other be distinctly taught that virtue was not always rewarded here, and that no argument could be drawn from affliction and ignominy against the person who suffered it. The Book of Job does this. As David typified the Conqueror, Job typified the *Victim*, and that put before us in the one special character of an undeserving sufferer, he foreshadowed the great undeserving Sufferer of all, and so in some degree prepared for the mystery of the cross.¹

Job's name signifies *the afflicted one*, and Christ was to come as "the Man of Sorrows." Job was given up as God's "righteous servant," to be tried and tempted of Satan. His threefold temptation may carry our thoughts to the tempted Son of God. Job was rich, "the greatest man of the East," and became poor. So did Christ. Job the "perfect and upright man, who feared God and eschewed evil," was condemned as a great sinner by his own friends, so was Christ. Job seemed to be stricken by God and forsaken by Him, so was Christ. "We did esteem Him stricken, and smitten of God, and afflicted. We hid as it were our faces from Him." Job defeated Satan, and after his sore trial the Lord "gave Job twice as much as he had before," and he was commanded to act as priest, and offer sacrifice for those who had turned from him in his low estate, and pray for them. So Christ, whose face was marred more than any man's triumphed over prin-

¹ See Lee on Inspiration.

cialities and powers, and was constituted Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek, He made intercession for the transgressors, and pleaded the merit of His sacrifice on behalf of those who had laid to His charge things that He knew not, and now He is the one Mediator between God and man, and ever liveth to make intercession for us.

I say, again, that as a shadow is ever an imperfect representation of that which it shadows, so the historic types of Christ very imperfectly resembled the Holy Jesus Who was to come. Still in some aspects they were preparative, until at last the cry grew loud, "Art thou He that should come, or look we for another?" and blessed indeed were those who in the fulness of time could say experimentally, "We have found the Christ."

Dear brethren, *we* live in the noontide light of the Gospel dispensation, the dispensation of the Spirit, when the Holy Ghost leads into all truth. *We* have set before us the One Righteous, all spotless Victim, the true Mediator and Advocate with the Father, the sympathising High Priest Who was tempted like as we are, yet without sin—the One in whom Satan found nothing at all, and that One offers Himself to us as life, righteousness, peace, salvation, song, strength, refuge, and all we want for heaven and immortality. Thou, O Christ, art all I want. And if God said to the three friends, "Go to my servant Job and offer a burnt offering, and my servant Job shall pray for you, for him will

I accept, *lest I deal with you after your folly*," should not *we* go to the Righteous, the All-righteous, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, *lest God deal with us after our folly*? No one of Job's three friends refused to do as God told him, no one of them would dare to let God deal with him after his folly. Will any one here dare God to do as He threatens? Remember the deluge, remember Sodom, remember Jerusalem, and say, "How shall we escape if we neglect so inexpressibly great salvation, which at this minute is offered freely to all who will accept it! Oh, go to my Saviour Jesus, and he will pray for you, for Him hath God accepted, and let us not turn again to folly.

The question for every one to put to himself now is this, Which do I decide upon, *to be "accepted in the Beloved," or dealt with by a holy and just God "according to my folly?"* To be accepted in the Beloved is to have an indisputable title to heaven. To be dealt with according to our folly is certain destruction from the presence of the Lord.

IV.

JOB IN THE HOME.

"There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job ; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household ; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east. And his sons went and feasted in their houses, everyone his day ; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all : for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually."—JOB i. 1-5.

TELL me what a man is in the home, and you tell me what he really is. Abroad he may assume a habit and deportment which will prevent even those who see him often from knowing much of his true character, but at home in the family he is *himself*.

The Book of Job opens by showing us the *patriarch in the home*. We see him there the man

of God deeply solicitous about the spiritual well-being of his family. Possessed of great wealth, and perhaps a king such as was in those ancient times in the east, he was not absorbed in the affairs of this life, but looked off to the world beyond.

The first verse of the Book gives a fourfold description of him. He was "perfect," as Noah was said to be perfect in his generation. The word by no means implies sinlessness, for "if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves." When applied to the Christian the word means *matured* in the spiritual life, as distinguished from the babe in Christ. This maturity is seen—not in the absence of sin—but in the harmony of character. In young Christians you have often to notice one grace overshadowing another; for example, zeal overshadowing wisdom; boldness, humility. When Job was said to be perfect we are to understand a well-balanced godly character. Secondly, Job is said to have been "*upright*," a word often applied to a road that is straight, or a path that is level or even, and when used in reference to Job it points out his straightforward, well-defined integrity of character. Thirdly, Job is said to have "*feared God*." True religion is often described in the Scriptures as the fear of the Lord. You all know passages like these, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." "Perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence." Fourthly, Job is said to have *eschewed evil*, a characteristic which

might be expected to follow the other three. Job was sincere, upright, a worshipper of God, and he was one who abstained from all wrong. Job then was a very good man and eminently pious.

We look now at the patriarch in the home. He had a family of seven sons and three daughters, and these, we have good reason for believing, he sought to train up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It was in a home like Job's that the poet might have written of children coming from God in trailing clouds of glory.

"Heaven lies about us in our *infancy*,
Shades of the prison-house begin to close upon the *growing boy* ;
But he beholds the light and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy ;
The *youth* who daily from the East
Must travel, still is Nature's priest ;
And by the vision splendid, is on his way attended ;
At length the *man* perceives it die away,
And fade into the common light of day."

It is likely that thus Job's children passed from infancy to maturity, and the time came for them to leave their father's house and lose some of the great privileges they had enjoyed there. But Job's earnest prayerful yearning for their souls' well-being was rather intensified than lessened. It was the custom of the sons to make a feast in their houses, each on his birthday, not for dissipation, or Job would not have allowed his daughters to join them, but for enjoyment of each other's society, and as a *sign of happy union*. Job did not go to these

parties, and he observed them, harmless as they were in themselves, not without anxiety, for he knew how prone the heart is to forget the Lord. It was evidently a happier time with Job when his children were younger and all under his own roof. In chapter xxix. we read of him saying, "O that it were with me as in days past, when the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me?" It was one of his sweetest joys to recall the time when his children were as olive plants round about his table. Do you, my friends, whose children are "round about you" remember what a holy happy time you may, by God's grace, make of the present. Many, very many, have longed for the period to come back again which for a little is now yours. At most you cannot long have your children round about you. There are few things more certain than that. Strive then that now in this world they may have a knowledge of God's truth, and in the world to come life everlasting.

When Job's family grew up, and each member of it had a home of his own, the patriarch felt that he had not the control of his children that he once had. But his earnest loving solicitude was in nowise diminished. When the days of his sons' feasting were over, we read that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings for them all: for Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God (~~or~~ rather, *bid adieu* to God) in their hearts." What Job

feared was forgetfulness of God. He was afraid that in the midst of their feasting and conversation they might willingly for a season dismiss God from their thoughts. This uneasiness felt by the holy patriarch, because he feared that his sons had bid adieu to God in their festivity, is also felt by many a parent whose children have grown up and begun to go into society and sit at the festive board. And it is right for parents to concern themselves deeply for the spiritual condition of their children even when grown up. Job offered burnt offerings according to the number of his sons, for they each needed the blood of atonement, they each needed Christ—*Christ* not for a collective family only, but Christ for each one individually. And “this did Job continually.” His piety was not as a summer brook, it was as the perennial spring—the well of water springing up unto everlasting life.

A very goodly sight is thus brought before us for our edification. We are shown the venerable saint elevated at the family altar, probably erected on some height, beneath some shady grove, surrounded by his praying family and bending servants, all in the early morning hour united in holy worship. What sight more goodly than family worship heartily conducted! One of the giddiest of poets was filled with solemn admiration at the gathering in the cottage, when the holy parent reads the sacred page to his attentive circle.

"Then kneeling down to Heaven's Eternal King,
The saint, the father, and the husband prays ;
Hope 'springs exulting on triumphant wing,'
That thus they all shall meet in future days ;
Then ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their Creator's praise ;
In such society yet still more dear,
While circling time moves round in an eternal sphere."

Job truly learnt to show piety at home, and herein is an example for all of us. The Christian is to learn to say with *David*, "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt Thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." You have an illustration of this in David's case when he brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom into the city of Jerusalem. We are told in 2 Sam. vi. 20, "*Then David returned to bless his household.*" Having offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord, and dismissed the multitude with presents, often blessing them in the name of the Lord, although a Monarch he was also the head of a family. "*Then David returned to bless his household.*"

And how could he bless his household? By example, and by government, and by discipline, and by instruction, and by securing their attendance on the means of grace, and by domestic devotion. And thus would we have parents leaving the sanctuary on the Lord's day—"returning home to bless their

household." In reference to God, relations of responsibility, gratitude, and dependence, should lead them to do this, and in reference to themselves, their families, their servants, and their guests, there are many reasons why they should do it.

Look at Job thousands of years ago, calling his children together early in the morning, and sanctifying them, and sacrificing for them, and praying for them, and blessing them, and this he did continually. His was truly home religion. He knew what it was to bless his household.

Abraham's example might also be given as an illustration of the godly man's home religion. God said, "I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."

Persons now-a-days will sometimes say we do not like to do more than hint to our elder children what our wishes are about the worship of God. They think it best to leave them to themselves in these matters. "This did not Abraham." I know him that he will *command* his children and his household—*command* them with the holy authority given to the parent by God. It was evidently thus with Job. He sent for his sons and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all. *Thus did Job continually.*

Joshua's example may also be given as an illustration of this home religion which Job's history teaches us.

The great captain of Israel was as earnest in the piety of the home, as he was in the grave responsibilities of his public position. "*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*" His godliness was a reality, and as far as possible he would make it to appear such at home. It is only God Himself who can set the hearts of our children right; we cannot give grace, but like Israel's godly commander we can have such personal dealings with God, and then such personal dealings with our families, that, as far as in us lies, we may take up Joshua's hearty resolve, "*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*" There are some persons who seem as if they only meant "*as for me,*" and like Eli they are irresolute and weak with regard to their house. And ["hear it, O heaven, and give ear, O earth!"] there are some persons who would have their children brought up religiously and well, without leading the way themselves as Job did, and as Joshua did, "*As for me and my house.*" Who can ever expect that his children will rise up and call him blessed, if he does no more than direct them to "*go*" to Jesus? If it was said of Julius Cæsar that he never said to his soldiers, "*Itē*" but always "*Venite,*" surely the parent may learn to follow his example in family religion, and always say with

Joshua, "*Come to Jesus.*" "*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*"

There is an expression in Jer. xxxi. verse 1, which should be very dear to the heads of households. "At that time I will be the God of all the families of Israel." It is well to think of the Lord as the God of Elijah, the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, but it is better and brighter to think of Him as the God of whole families. Job's earnest desire was to have the Lord the God of His family, his whole family. *Moses* who was faithful in all his house viewed God as the God of the family, the God of Amram, and Jochebed, and Aaron, and Miriam, as well as himself. He exclaims, "He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt Him." The old heathen notion of a household god, who could be kept in the home and carried with the family from one house to another, was a distortion of a great and blessed truth, and expressed a want which Job knew that the God of the families of Israel could satisfy.

But, then, I should much like to turn this subject to real and practical account, and ask you to do as Job did, and aim at knowing the Lord to be the God of your whole family. If you belong to God all your family affairs will be His, the prattle of the children, sweet to you, will be sweet to Him, and the trials and sorrows of the home will be sustained by Him, and the family graves, and the stone with

the well-remembered names, much to you, will be more to Him, much more to Him. We have none of us sufficiently regarded the importance of well-ordered home piety. The happy Christian household is God's emblem of His Church in glory. When a whole family is named of Jesus, it is a miniature of God's whole family in heaven and earth.

If in some other way you would know how much the Lord thinks of a godly family, remember how the Holy Ghost speaks of Bethany. He calls it "the town of Martha and her sister Mary." Man might have characterised it as a place of great loveliness, or as the place where some rich Pharisee had his country residence, or where some luxuriant noble dwelt, calling the lands after his own name, but Jesus knew it as the town of two pious sisters, who perhaps lived in a somewhat humble cottage under the shade of a fig tree. That cottage was dear to Christ. His Father loved it well, for there dwelt three justified souls, and angels knew it well, for there they were constantly ministering to three heirs of salvation. *We* have names for towns, and streets, and houses, so has God. God named Bethany after a pious family.

But you might ask, If God so delights in the households of His people, and energizes a Balaam to say, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" how comes it that the eminently pious Job's children were cut down in

one day? If the holy man's sons and daughters were godly, their sudden death was to them instant glory. When we remember how they were brought up, we fall back upon God's promise concerning the training up of children in the way they should go, and that word to his own people, "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." It is not likely that Job's children were cut off in sin; then, indeed, his calamity could never have been repaired. I think it likely that all ten were saved.

If you turn to the closing chapter of the book you read, "The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before." By the miraculous intervention of God Himself, his camels, oxen, and she-asses, were exactly doubled, disease fled from him, and wealth flowed into his house from all sides. "He had also seven sons and three daughters," the number he had lost. And *why*—if God gave Job double of all he had before—*why* did Job have but the number of children lost? Was it not to teach him that they were not really lost, but gone before? There is a difference between the spirit of a man that goeth upwards, and the spirit of a beast that goeth downwards. God did not double Job's children in order that he might not despair of seeing those that were gone, and in order that he might know that they were still alive. His *irrational animals*, and all the wealth which he had

lost had wholly perished, but his children who had died were still living as to the noblest part of themselves. Since, therefore, he was enriched with other sons and daughters, *that* possession also might be truly said to have been doubled unto him. Thus in every sense God gave Job twice as much as he had lost, and his last end was better than his beginning. And if in his former home he had made his piety like the flame of a scented lamp filling the dwelling with light and fragrance, we may suppose that his latter home was truly a Bethel, where the lamp of God never went out. The comfort which he had in his children seems to have been anticipated in the names of his daughters. The first was *Jemima*, which means "day-light;" it told of a morning of joy after a night of weeping. The second was *Kezia*, so named from the sweet spice "cassia;" it told of the sweet savour in which the holy man spent his latter days. And the third was *Keren-happuch*, which signifies "horn of plenty;" and it told of the full supply of the patriarch's need. These names were obviously designed to perpetuate the remembrance of God's great goodness to him.

The loving and loved parent we are told lived long after his captivity was turned. His children's children grew up about him to hear his story and to call him blessed.

"O happy house! O home supremely blest!
Where Thou, Lord Jesus Christ, art entertained

As the most welcome and beloved guest,
With true devotion and with love unfeigned."

Dear friends, look to your homes. Be Israelites indeed. Let the blood of the Lamb be visible to all who visit your dwelling. In Egypt's dark midnight hour Israel had no uncertain mark upon its houses. Now in this dark period there are many homes which may or may *not* be dedicated to the Lord. The tokens of true fellowship are but dimly seen. And yet nothing so truly ennobles and beautifies a household as the Gospel of Salvation in its power. This is the true ark which brings a blessing to the home of Obed-edom. This is the true light which makes Bethany's humble cottage the lighted palace of the King of Glory. It is this makes a Goshen in a dark Egypt. The Christian's home, like the gold-mine, may have a poor exterior, but it has what is precious within. The Christian's home may be a fisherman's cabin, but there is the pearl of the greatest price. The home where the inmates are at peace with God is a little heaven below. O look to your homes. See to home religion. Remove all leaven. See that no leprosy cleaves to the tent. Let it be manifest that you entertain the Lord of angels, and that *not* unawares. In gospel story we are told that sometimes when Jesus was in a house it was "noised abroad," it could not be hid. I do not think He can long be in any home now without its telling upon a whole *neighbourhood* in some degree.

Think of Job's piety in the dim dawn of the world's history, and then say what should *our* homes be, with so much light, so many privileges, so many opportunities. Oh for more Jobs in the rich blaze of this dispensation. Oh for more Abrahams commanding their children ; more Davids blessing their households ; more Joshuas taking their whole house into covenant with God, and more heads of families saying with Moses, "He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation, my father's God, and I will exalt him."

O my God—God of the families of Israel—dispose the families of this congregation to take Thee truly to be their God, and make them to prepare Thee an habitation in their *homes*, that so those homes may be none other than the House of God, the gate of heaven. Amen.

V.

JOB ABROAD IN THE WORLD.

“When the ear heard me, then it blessed me ; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me : because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me ; and I caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me : my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor : and the cause which I knew not I searched out.”—JOB xxix. 11-16.

WE have seen the patriarch in the home, here we may see what he was *abroad in the world*.

As a rule it is a mark of folly for one to speak of his own goodness, but there are times when we may without any impropriety declare facts, notwithstanding the mention of them does tend to proclaim our own praise. For example Job had been calumniated, and false charges had been brought against him, and he did right to vindicate himself and refute the calumnies of his mistaken friends. His friends *thought he must have been a great hypocrite, and in*

chapter xxii. we find Eliphaz accusing him of divers sins, and bidding him repent of them. It was in answer to these charges that he appealed to facts for the establishment of his innocence, and grander far than the noble and fearless hero who laid bare his breast for the daggers of his false friends, was the patriarch in his fallen fortunes bidding his accusers review his past life, and convict him *if they justly could*.

It is happy for those who can appeal so fearlessly to their unstained integrity in the broad light of day.

Samuel was one whose holy and consistent character was so before the world that he could challenge Israel, saying, "Behold here I am, witness against me before the Lord, whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith?" Occupying a high position, beset with strong temptations, he could nevertheless appeal to the thousands of Israel to bear witness against any act of his life that was inconsistent or wrong. His virtues were the glory of his judicial robes.

St. Paul was another who, like Job, could fearlessly point to his past career. In Acts xx. we find him saying to the assembled elders of Ephesus, "Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations. . . . I take you to

record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men." (See also 2 Cor. xi. and xii.)

We return then to Job, and look at him in the world, and from his appeal to facts for the vindication of his character, we shall learn not only what our character *ought* to be, but what has actually been attained in a far darker period of the Church's history.

Notice first *Job's diffusive benevolence.*

Misery was ever the object of his tender compassion. Had he lived in our day how thankfully would he have supported hospitals for the sick poor, hospitals for the curable and the incurable. How certainly he would have been the patron of Ophthalmic hospitals, Orthopædic institutions, Children's sick wards, Widows' charities, Old men's homes, and Orphans' societies. As it was, we find he could declare, "I was eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and a father to the poor; and the cause which I knew not I searched out." He could solemnly avow, "I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him." He could appeal to facts, and say that he had made the widow's heart to "sing for joy." And he could fearlessly say, "If I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering, if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep . . . then let mine arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and mine arm be *broken from the bone.*" Such constant and diffusive

benevolence had the sun for its emblem. The sun ever pours its golden light upon mountain and plain, and it would not be itself if it did not shine upon a needy, begging world.

Herein we should learn to imitate Job's constant and diffusive benevolence. If we know the power of the Gospel and the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us, should we not seek in every way to show our love to God and our love to our brother also? "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust and have not, ye kill and desire to have, and cannot obtain; ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not."

Ye have heard of the *charities* of Job, how he prepared his seat in the street, and sat as one that comforted the mourners, and men waited for his words, as they waited for the rain, "for the latter rain," but there are few like him. So many seek their own and not another's wealth. But this benevolence of character is recorded by God's Spirit for our example. Perhaps no one listening to me could accomplish *all* the golden deeds of love which so marked the character of Job, still none of us should be satisfied with the measure of love we have shown to our fellow-creatures. Christian love must be progressive. "*Walk* in love as dear children." "See that ye *abound* in love." We cannot all do great things. In some respects Job sits as

king in the army of philanthropists, but we can enlist in that army and preserve a habit of loving-kindness. We cannot all be like that great French lawyer, who devoted his time and wealth to the good of his fellow-creatures, and bequeathed at his death the sum of 10,000 francs to provide for an annual prize for whosoever shall discover any mode of rendering any mechanical art less unhealthful; a like sum of 10,000 francs as an annual prize for whosoever shall invent any means of perfecting medical science, or surgical art; a like sum of 10,000 francs to the poor French person, who, in the course of the year, shall have performed the most virtuous action; a like sum of 10,000 francs for the French person who shall have composed and published in France the book most beneficial to morals; but by attention to a habit of loving kindness even in little things, we can each help to make the earth brighter, and its tears fewer, and its groans less loud. When John Newton gave the child a penny to buy another plate for the one she had had the misfortune to break in the street, he came home saying he had lifted a grain off the mountain of human misery. Our lives can be more made up of this grain lifting. It is thus the worm Jacob must thresh the mountain. The poor ragged boy who found an overdriven sheep fallen down in the road, panting and weary, and ran and brought it water in his old torn cap, was as truly in Job's army of *the kind hearted* as was Howard or Wilberforce.

Let us seek to have Job's habit of kind heartedness ; let us be like *Boaz*, who not only let the gleaner pick up what he could not help her taking, but instructed the young men to let some handfuls "fall on purpose." Whatever God's bounty gives us to reap, let us consider the gleaners, and *purposely* make others partakers of our joys.

In the next place we may observe that Job's character abroad in the world was marked by *unblemished integrity*.

There are some benevolently disposed persons who are said to be more generous than just. But nothing could bias Job's judgment, or induce him to swerve from the path of equity. In chapter xxxi. we find him saying, "If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence this were an iniquity to be punished by the judge." "If my land cry against me, or that the furrows likewise thereof complain ; if I have eaten the fruits thereof without money, or have caused the owners thereof to lose their life, let thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley." What a noble character have we here, how conscious of rectitude was the patriarch ! He protested that he had never set his heart upon the wealth of the world, nor taken the things of it as his portion and happiness, and all who knew him, knew him to be a man of undaunted resolution in a good cause, who boldly appeared, spake, and acted, in defence of religion and justice.

His words in our text were, "I put on righteousness and it clothed me; my judgment was a robe and a diadem." The righteousness of the Saviour he had put on by faith, it was his robe in the sight of God, in which he was presented unblameable, and irreproachable before Him; but here he means righteousness in the administration of his public duties. Imputed righteousness justified him, inherent righteousness sanctified him. Imputed righteousness made him shine before God, inherent righteousness made him shine before men. Imputed righteousness discharged him from guilt, inherent righteousness discharged him from hypocrisy. "*I put on righteousness and it clothed me, and my judgment was a robe and a diadem.*" He stood forth in the world a marked man, and a great man. "No man is great till he sees everything in this world to be little." Job's holy mind was engaged in holy employments. Worldly things were too little for him. The vine and the fig-tree think it no great matter to reign over the trees, but to the bramble this seems a great matter. "It would be so fine to be king bramble." Job declared righteousness better than kingly apparel, and justice a far brighter diadem than the crown of princes. Happy, holy Job! He was in the world but not of it. He shone forth a light in the darkness. The Lord had made him his witness and light bearer amongst formalists and sceptics, and the worldly and the unstable, and he had made *his lamp* so shine that men could see his good

works and glorify his Father in heaven. "I put on righteousness and it clothed me, and my judgment was as a robe and a diadem."

And thus "*Wisdom is justified of all her children.*" The children of Wisdom are the sons of God by grace, and they, as was Job, shall be approved by the testimony of their work of faith, and patience of hope, and labour of love. Christians are to commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

Let us now see what improvement we can make of this view of Job's life. We have seen him in the world, a man of constant and diffusive benevolence, and of unblemished integrity. Now he is no more in the world but *we* are in the world. *We* have duties to perform. *We* are called to be light bearers. *We* are called to be Christ's manifestly living epistles. *We* are called to be God's witnesses. *We* are called to be the salt of the earth. The time is coming when we must leave the world, and (if Christ's redeemed) go unto the Father. The night is far spent. The sands of time are running out. It is our duty to use the world as not abusing it. We are to live holily and unblameably before Christ in love.

Let us look at two passages of the inspired word which will show us the believer's present position in the world. In Canticles ii. 2, Christ says, "As the lily among thorns so is my love among the daughters." Now there you have the Christian's

present position. The lily is among thorns, for it is there that the believer grows like his Lord in His passive excellencies, forbearance, long suffering, and multiplied forgiveness. This was once Job's position, it is now ours if we are Christ's. It is not by accident, it is intentional that the lily at present is among the thorns. Jesus knows His people's surroundings. "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." Our Lord Himself was once the Lily of the valley crowned with thorns. He hath left the world and gone to the Father, and soon His people shall be gathered from out of the world and be with Him where He is. In heaven there are no thorns.

Another passage is St. John xvii. 18, "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." Christians may be as lilies among thorns, sheep among wolves, doves among vultures, but He Who sends them into the world will keep them for His great name's sake. "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world." Christ was not sent into the retirement of the family, He was not sent into the sanctity of the temple, He was not sent into the society of His disciples, He was not sent into the solitudes of the wilderness, but He was sent into the broad world. And saith the Saviour, "As Thou hast sent Me *into the world*, even so have I sent *them also into the world*." And why was Christ sent

into the world? There were some things, such as His stupendous atonement, which He alone could accomplish, but when we read, "Even so have I also sent them into the world," we look for points in which the disciples may resemble the Lord, and this we may say, Christ sends them into the world that they may glorify God in the world; that they may reflect His image in the world; that they may be a blessing in the world; that they may testify against the evil of the world. Christ was sent into the world to glorify God, and at the close of life He said, "I *have* glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do," and even so are believers sent into the world. And oh, how would angels like to be *so* sent into the world? but it is *we*, not angels, who are to be God's witnesses; it is *we*, not angels, who are to live a life of faith upon the promise of a covenant God on the earth; it is *we*, not angels, who are sent into the world, even as Christ was sent into the world. How great the honour of the saints, and yet how few reach even the pious Job's standard "in the world!" "A great painter, Allston, who died some time ago left many pictures, which were mostly sketches, yet here and there a part finished with much beauty. Is it not thus that most Christians leave the world, their character as God's witnesses mostly in dim outline, though perhaps here and there marks of more completeness? Well is it that that which is in part shall be done away, and God Himself shall perfect

that which concerneth us, and finish the pictures in His own forms and colours."

III. Having looked at Job *in the world*, and considered what the Scripture says of the Christian's present position *in the world*, let us notice the encouragement that the believer has for being—as Job was—God's witness "*in the world*."

When we think of the better side of Job's character we must feel that we fall far short of it, and when we remember that he was but a fellow sinner and in our life and walk in the world we are to be followers of CHRIST, "the holy, harmless, undefiled," we must surely say, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

Let us therefore for our *encouragement* recall Christ's prayer for His disciples in St. John xvii. 11, "Now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me." Here is the sweetest encouragement. We all fall very short of duty, but we have an Advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous. He ever liveth to make intercession for us. When, on the day of atonement, the Israelites stood round about the tabernacle conscious of defilement, they knew that Aaron was inside praying for them. *We* have the true Aaron, the ever-sympathising High Priest for us entered within the veil. When Israel went out to fight with Amalek, Moses, with arms *uplifted, prayed*, and Israel prevailed. *We* have the

true Moses to pray for us, and His intercessions never grow weary. In the time of sore conflict and civil war in Israel, we are told of the tender-hearted David going up to a chamber on the gate in prayerful solicitude for his undutiful son. *We* in all our struggles have the true David pleading on our behalf. In gospel story we are shown the disciples in the night storm at sea, and Jesus upon the mount in prayer. That is the way now. His disciples are toiling and longing for the land of rest, they are often buffeted with waves, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, but Jesus prays for them and they are safe. How sweetly encouraging is this! He who upheld Job and turned his captivity, can and will help all who would tread in the steps of Job. There will be conflict, there will be difficulty, there may be *depression*, but this is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith. When in Revelation xii. we read of the serpent casting out of his mouth water as a flood that he might destroy the woman, it is added the earth helped the woman and swallowed up the flood. So now the dragon is wrath with the woman and with the remnant of her seed which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ, but the Lamb in the midst of the throne helps the otherwise weak and helpless woman. "Holy Father, *keep* through Thine own name those Thou has given Me." Thus the mighty Friend of those who put their trust in Him, even prays on behalf of His own. He "*helps*

the woman," and if necessary would make the earth open her mouth to swallow up the flood, or would send down twelve legions of angels to bind the serpent, rather than that one Job or the weakest saint should perish. "I pray not that Thou wouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou wouldest keep them from the evil." Satan is the great Evil One. "Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those Thou hast given Me."

For the support and encouragement of every trusting soul be it known and remembered that believers are a kept people, "preserved in Christ Jesus," "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." This is the Father's will that sent Me, saith Christ, that of all which He hath given Me, I should lose *nothing*—not even the dust, how much less, then, the precious soul!

O you who, like Job, have made Jesus your Redeemer, like Job, carry your piety boldly into the broad world. Job had his seat in the street. He sat as a king in the army. He put on righteousness as a robe, and justice as a diadem. He added to his faith virtue. He showed in the world what things accompany salvation. Go you and do likewise. You are weak, but God's Spirit is omnipotent. You are sinful, but Christ's blood cleanses from all sin. You are undeserving, but it is never creature merit that saves a soul. It is not what can *I* do to inherit life? but what has *Christ* done?

“Nothing, either great or small,
Nothing, sinner, no ;
Jesus did it, did it all,
Long, long ago.”

May we each have personal dealings with Christ to the salvation of our souls, and then, *having salvation*, may we go forth, as Job, into the world, showing a deportment becoming the Gospel of Christ, that men may take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus. “When the ear heard me, then it blessed me ; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me : because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me : and I caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me : my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor : and the cause which I knew not I searched out.”

VI.

JOB IN DEPRESSION.

"Oh, that I were as in months past!"—JOB xxix. 2.

THE beautiful mountains, the conical-shaped summits of which furnish with picturesque apices the mountain scenery of Wicklow, were by the native Irish called by a name which signifies "*the gilt spears*," derived from their retaining the light of the sun after the rest of the surrounding landscape was involved in darkness. A significant name, and one which may illustrate the beautiful piety of the patriarch Job. There are some persons who are so easily depressed and overcast in mind, that they are the first on whom darkness falls, and the last from off whose spirit the darkness disperses. Job was the opposite of these. His cheerful trustful heart was influenced by a piety which rose like "*the gilt spears*," to retain the sunlight when all below was darkness. Most men would have fallen *into a state of sad depression* long before Job did.

However, even "the gilt spears" are at length wrapped in folds of thickest darkness, and the greatest and brightest Christians have their night seasons. It was thus with Abraham when he went down into Egypt and feared the people would kill him. It was thus with Jacob when Esau was coming against him. It was thus with Moses when God said to him, "Why criest thou unto me, speak to the children of Israel that they go forward." It was thus with David when, hunted as a partridge on the mountains, he cried, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." It was thus with Elijah when he fled from Jezebel and threw himself down under the juniper tree, and asked to die. It was thus with the Baptist John when from his prison cell he sent to Jesus, saying, "*Art thou He that should come?*" It was thus with Paul in the tempest, when the angel of God stood by him and said, "Fear not, Paul."

In the case of Job we see one who bore up well for a time; afflictions increased upon him, his trials were unprecedented, but in all these he sinned not, nor charged God foolishly. His wife soon gave way, and "spoke as one of the foolish women," but the trustful Job held fast his confidence, "Shall we receive good of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?"

Still the depression came, the darkness came, the night came, the winter of the soul came, the heart-sinking came, the misery came.

It was a great change. One whose heart had been as a banquet hall, bright and festive, and all jubilant with song, was now in darkness; the heart was bereft, the lights of festival were extinguished, the happy guests were all gone, the harp and the viol were silent, and the beasts of prey prowling for food, alone were heard.

It was a *great change*. Satan seemed very near. God seemed very far off. Death and destruction were in sight, heaven and glory were quite out of view. It was "the blackness of darkness," but not for ever.

"Oh, that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me, when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle, when the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me; when I washed my steps with butter, and the rock poured me out rivers of oil!" "I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls. My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat. My harp also is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep." . . . "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His throne!" Such were some of the lamentations of Job, and I for one thank the Lord that they have been recorded. I know that seasons of darkness and *felt desertion* are not uncommon in the household

of faith, and I shall rejoice if I can be a minister of consolation from Him whose command is, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people."

If you would see how dejection will sometimes prevail in the most godly soul, read what a saint like the late Lady Powerscourt wrote. She said, "I often fear my name has been blotted out of the book of life, and that the Lord is weary of intreating me to accept all the blessings of the gospel. I know you will set about comforting me, but it is not *that* I want. What I feel is an apathy and indifference, whether *one* of the promises belongs to me or not. Oh, if you knew the difference of my feelings from this time last year, you would think the same as I do. I was so happy with Him then, that I thought I could never be moved, the Lord of His goodness had made my hill so strong. I remember saying, that, let events turn out as they might, my happiness was insured. Even if shut up for life in a dungeon, I could be nothing but happy with the prospect of being one with my Saviour. But he hid His face from me, and I was troubled. I find I can do without anything but Him, but having once tasted His love, everything else has lost its sweetness. I feel now that I care for nothing, not for the things of *another* world; and I am sure not for the things of *this*. Instead of running to my Bible as a hungry man to his food, I read it as a task. Prayer is no more my sweetest pleasure, but a duty which I feel glad to have over.

And when I go to it I have *nothing to say* to my Lord! The contemplation of heaven used to be so sweet, it made everything earthly appear as nothing. Now I do not feel as if it would give me the least pleasure to hear that I was to be there to-morrow. Oh, if you knew how unmoved my heart is at all the wonderful means of grace I enjoy, one beautiful sermon after another! I feel none of the delight I once used at seeing a Christian walk into the room. Instead of loving to hear them talk of the Saviour, I am at a loss for something to say, indifferent, totally so, about the souls of others."

Here, my friends, was *winter*, here was *night*, in the soul of one of the most devoted servants of God, who, generally speaking, had bright and happy views of Jesus, bright and happy views of glory, and often when others were cast down, "the gilt spears" of beautiful Wicklow retained the sunlight. Truly did she say at another time, "I do think one chief part of our happiness hereafter, will consist in our having done with wretched self—God being all in all."

My friends, beware of an intoxication of grief, and beware of charging God foolishly. There are two women brought before us in Holy Scripture at whom I have been surprised. One was the wife of Job, the other the wife of Pontius Pilate, the latter in one instance would bear a favourable comparison with the former. We find her beseeching Pilate to *deal kindly with the Just One*, whereas Job's coun-

sellors bade him have hard thoughts of the Lord God. And oh, how many are the hard thoughts entertained by those who should know better! We might expect "one of the foolish women," we might expect heathen Pilate's wife, to charge God foolishly, but what shall we say of Christians rebelling and contending against the Holy and the Just.

There are two considerations for us to keep in mind whenever, like Job, we are lamenting a sense of the apparent desertion of God. Let me set them briefly before you.

One is that there may be something in *ourselves* which causes dejection. This is very probable.

In chapter xv. 4, Eliphaz rightly suggests that restraining prayer will occasion it. "Thou restrainest prayer before God." It was perhaps ill naturedly said to Job, but it is certain that no one gets all the good he might out of prayer. To rejoice in the Lord always we should pray without ceasing. If we restrain prayer it is no wonder that we have heart sinkings. May the Blessed Spirit of grace and supplication keep us from doing so, and make us more like Daniel who would rather be devoured by lions than restrain prayer.

Another cause in ourselves may be spiritual ignorance. Many persons are bowed down because they have neglected the study of God's Word, and, therefore, they are filled with sorrows which more ample knowledge would have prevented. The study

of the Word is indispensably necessary to the comfort of the soul.

Another cause in ourselves may be an undue entangling of our hearts in the affairs of this life. All have of necessity some wordly engagements which it is their bounden duty to perform. But when we needlessly absorb our minds in our temporal concerns, we must expect to suffer loss in those which are spiritual.

Another cause in ourselves may be indulgence in sin and actual backsliding from God. "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me." Unsubdued sin eateth, as a canker, the strength of the heart. Bildad the Shuhite asked Job if the rush can grow up without mire, and the flag without water. It was as if he asked, "Can vital godliness flourish where the Holy Spirit is quenched, and where Satan is not resisted?" It is no wonder if the backslider goes all through the land of the promises, and, though so fruitful to others, finds it all barrenness to himself.

But there is, I have said, another consideration for the depressed to keep in mind. A season of darkness *may be altogether disciplinary and ordered by God in love and wisdom.* David's sense of desertion was preceded by spiritual declension—"Before I was afflicted I went astray." It was different in Job's case. Job was perhaps never so holy as just before the enemy fell upon him, and his season of *darkness* required looking at in our second aspect,

namely as ordered by the loving and wise God as discipline for his servant. Those in darkness have therefore these things to bear in mind, (1st.) *God's sovereignty.* God is all-wise, and His love unchanging, but He must not be always asked, "What doest thou? Why withdrawest thou thy face?" God does not always give account of His matters. God is in heaven and we are on earth. When we are in heaven too, we shall be shown things that we cannot bear now. *Again*, the depressed have to keep in mind that in learning "*the fellowship of Christ's sufferings*," we must know something of the hidings of God's face to comprehend in a faint degree the deepest cry of Jesus, "My God! my God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?" *Again*, those in darkness have to bear in mind that it is in this way the Lord sees well to prepare some of His servants for great offices. It was thus with Job. It was in his darkness that the Lord prepared him for his royal priesthood. We may be sure that his latest ministry was the most blessed of all. *Again*, those in darkness have to bear in mind that this is God's way of keeping down spiritual pride. Remember Hezekiah. Remember Jeshurun. The fire that burns within, like that upon the hearth, may be put out by a flood of light as well as a flood of water. God knows when the shade is best for Job. *Again*, the temporary withdrawal of the light of God's countenance makes us value it more when we have it. It was literally thus with the Church in

Solomon's Song. It was thus with the disciples after the resurrection of Jesus. *Again*, seasons of apparent desertion may be sent to try our faith. If our faith is worth anything it will be put to the test. Abraham's faith would never have been so tried as it was, had it been weak. The Syrophœnician woman's faith would never have been so tried as it was, had it been weak. *Job's* faith would never have been so tried as it was, had it been weak. There are men of strong faith, men of weak faith, and men of no faith. The Lord tests faith like Abraham's or Job's, in a way that he would not test weak faith. And, once again, seasons of apparent desertion may be suffered to come upon God's people that they may long for heaven, where they shall ever see Christ's face, and never, never, sin. "And from the rivers of his grace, drink endless pleasures in." Here, in sickness, and weariness, and temptation, our Jobs may cry, "Oh, that I were as in months past!" but God's word carries them not into a dead past, but a glorious future. "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty. They shall behold the land that is very far off." God bids the depressed and sick in mind prepare for heaven, and send their hearts there now. There the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick. There no Job shall say, "Oh, that I were as in months past." There no Hezekiah mourns as a dove in disease. There no Shunamite seeks the prophet's chamber wherein to *place her dead child*. There no David in hunger

shall long for shewbread. There no Hagar in thirst shall need an angel to show her a well. There no cripple shall lie at the beautiful gate of the temple. There no Joseph shall seek for a place where to weep, and enter a chamber and weep there. Brethren, our seasons of apparent desertion will be seasons of blessings if they give us longing desires for heaven.

But am I not addressing some who do not understand anything of Job's depression? Are there not some here who never for a moment felt troubled at the hiding of God's face? I tell such plainly that they have nothing to congratulate themselves upon. God said of Moab that he "had been at ease from his youth, and not emptied from vessel to vessel." This was a most dangerous condition, and brought down the lamentation, "Woe unto thee, Moab!" David speaks of those who are "not in trouble as other men, and not plagued as other men," and he adds, "Behold these are the *ungodly* that prosper in the world." Isaiah too is instructed to blow the shrill trumpet of warning. "Tremble, ye women that are at ease, be troubled, ye careless ones." *Anything*, brethren, is better than an easy indifference about our souls. God threatened the lukewarm Laodiceans that He would "spew them out of his mouth." Satan rejoices to see those in a congregation who have settled down in carnal security. David describes them as lying about the grave as

sheep—as *unwittingly* as poor silly sheep—that have no souls, no judgment-day, no eternity!

Instead of saying, “Oh, that it were with me as in months past!” Instead of saying—

“Where is the happiness I knew
When first I saw the Lord!
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and my God!”

Instead of sweet and sunny memories of communion with the Father, you have to begin at the very beginning. Hitherto you have tried to live without God in the world, and have scarcely felt “whether there be any Holy Ghost.”

I have no hard word for you. I could not have. It was once so with myself. It was once so with Samuel, for we read, “Samuel did not yet know the Lord.” It was once so with Manasseh, but the time came when he who had filled Jerusalem with blood, knelt in humble and filial prayer at the throne of grace. It was once so with Zaccheus, but Jesus called him down not only from the tree, but also from self-sufficiency, and he received Jesus joyfully. It was once so with the thief on the cross (oh, how near was he to being lost! talk of the eleventh hour? it was on the stroke of twelve!); but he was saved as truly as the father of the faithful. It was so with Saul of Tarsus, but when once he had met Jesus in the way he became a chosen vessel to bear the name and gospel of his Saviour to the Gentiles. *It was so with Lydia, till the happy Sabbath evening*

in summer when her heart was opened. It was once so with the Philippian jailer, till the earthquake, and *heart*-quake, and prison-opening, and *heart*-opening, and then old things passed away.

May He who turned Job's captivity, and gave him what was better than he enjoyed in months past, take from us all disease of soul, all poverty of soul, all friendlessness of soul, all solitariness of soul, and so show us the light of His reconciled countenance, that with Job we may each say, "Now mine eye seeth *Thee*;" and with St. John, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ."

VII.

JOB'S VIEW OF CHRIST AND RESURRECTION.

"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth : and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God : Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another."—JOB xix. 25-27.

THESE memorable, blessed words are introduced by the suffering patriarch by a deep heartfelt cry, "Oh, that my words were now written ! Oh, that they were printed in a book ! That they were graven with an iron pen, and lead in the rock for ever !" After the iron pen had graven them upon the rock, he would that lead could be poured in to preserve the marked characters for ever.

Spiritually, the great and glorious truth concerning the adorable Jesus was graven upon the Rock of Ages, with the iron nails of crucifixion and the spear of the soldiers. It was graven never to be forgotten. The most wonderful writing the world *ever knew* was *that*.

But literally, the declaration of the patriarch has indeed been written in a book, in the everlasting Word of God, and has been a comfort to tens of thousands of suffering and mourning ones in this dying world: and literally the words have been engraven upon the rock with pen of iron, they have formed the epitaph on the sepulchral stone in the sleeping places of departed saints in every age, and in every part of the world.

Let us now examine them, and may the Holy Spirit write them indelibly upon our hearts and memories, to the praise of the glory of His grace in Christ Jesus.

In the first place, notice the patriarch's view of Christ.

Secondly, the patriarch's assurance.

Thirdly, the patriarch's resurrection prospects.

And God grant in His infinite goodness that we may have like views of Christ, like assurance, and like resurrection prospects, with Job.

I. Notice the patriarch's view of Christ.

"I know that my Redeemer liveth." By nature we are tied and bound in Satan's prison, but a Redeemer has been provided for us. Job had defended himself against the unrighteous charges of his friends, but he was very conscious of his need of deliverance from a body of sin and death, and Christ was his Redeemer. The word is *Goël* which is used for the next of kin, and is sometimes translated kinsman. (Num. v. 8; Ruth ii. 20; 1 Kings

xvi. 11.) A blessed truth is infolded in the Word. Job's Redeemer was also a kinsman. Christ's kinsmanship qualified Him for being a Redeemer. The office of a Redeemer was to deliver a kinsman carried into captivity, as Abraham delivered Lot. Christ was Job's Redeemer Who delivered him from the worst captivity of all. Another office of a Redeemer was to recover by purchase a kinsman's lands when mortgaged, as Boaz did. Our heavenly inheritance was mortgaged by sin, we are ourselves utterly unable to redeem it, Christ is near of kin to us, and has paid the debt, and taken off the mortgage, and made a new settlement of the inheritance. It was also the office of a Redeemer to avenge the death of a murdered kinsman, and Christ has come bruising the serpent's head, and destroying the works of him who was *the* murderer from the beginning. Another duty of a Redeemer under the typical dispensation was to marry the surviving inheritrix of his estate, as Boaz married Ruth, and so hath the Lord Jesus joined Himself to His Church. By taking our nature and becoming near of kin to us, He has become our Goël, our Redeemer, our Deliverer, our Avenger, our Restorer, our Husband, our All and in all. He hath restored that which He took not away. All that our impoverished nature had lost by reason of Adam's fall, He has redeemed with His own inestimably precious blood. And such are the grace and power of our Goël-Redeemer, that He hath raised His people to a

happiness more exalted than Adam enjoyed in innocence.

Job, then, had cause for great triumph; his friends, his wealth, his health, had gone, but his Redeemer lived. *That* next Kinsman kept close to him when all his other kindred forsook him. "I know that my Goël Kinsman liveth and liveth to good purpose." One bright sun is worth more than a thousand stars. Job's friends had charged him with ignorance, but he had saving knowledge. "This is life eternal to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Acquaintance with God in Christ is peace. (Job xxii 21.) "*I know* that my Redeemer liveth."

Brethren, is Christ *your* Redeemer? We are naturally fond of the word *my*, *my* house, *my* lands, *my* horses, *my* influence, but it is never so sweet as when with Job we say, "*My* Redeemer." Thomas, when the cloud of unbelief was dispersed, exclaimed, "*My* Lord and *my* God;" but Job was taught by God's Holy Spirit to say what was sweeter still, "*My* Redeemer."

What a blessed view was this that the suffering saint had given him! May many of us thus look unto Jesus as our Kinsman Redeemer. We are in a dying world, but Jesus lives. We are in a sinful world, but Christ is His people's Redeemer. We live in a world of sorrow and bereavement, but Jesus is a near Kinsman. In nature we see God as a God around us; in providence we see God as a

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God above us; in the law we see God as a God against us; but in redemption in JESUS we see Him as God *with* us. Oh, then, may grace be given to you and me to enjoy Job's view of Jesus, "I know that my Redeemer liveth;" for with such a view of Christ by faith we shall long with Job for the clear undimmed vision which is in store for all the redeemed. "In my flesh shall I see God."

How many of us here are so trusting in Christ, that amid changes, and trials, and losses, and sicknesses, we can truly say, My *Redeemer-Kinsman* lives?

"He lives, He lives, Who once was dead,
He lives, my everlasting Head;
He lives, triumphant from the grave,
He lives, eternally to save.
He lives, all glorious in the sky,
He lives, exalted there on high!
He lives, to bless me with His love,
He lives, to plead for me above.
He lives, my hungry soul to feed,
He lives, to help in time of need;
He lives, to silence all my fears,
He lives, to stop and wipe my tears.
He lives, to calm my troubled heart,
He lives, all blessings to impart!
He lives, and grants me daily breath,
He lives, and I shall conquer death.
He lives, my mansion to prepare,
He lives, to bring me safely there;
He lives, all glory to His name,
He lives, eternally the same."

Jesus lives, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

II. Notice the patriarch's assurance. It was an

"assurance of understanding," an "assurance of faith," an "assurance of hope."

"I know that my Redeemer liveth." "*I know.*" Here you have the *full assurance of understanding* to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ. (Col. ii. 2.) "I know that *my* Redeemer liveth," *my* Redeemer; here you have the *full assurance of faith*. (Heb. x. 22.) "I know that my Redeemer liveth Whom I shall see for myself and not another. . . . In my flesh I shall see God." Here you have the *full assurance of hope* (Heb. vi. 11), the sure and certain hope of resurrection to eternal life.

What happy threefold assurance! There is no uncertainty, no hesitation; it is the firm and blessed confidence of Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He will keep for me that which I have committed unto him against that day." The Old Testament saint stood forth in full assurance, as did the New Testament saint. He had not so much light as St. Paul, but He who gave Job grace to say, "I know that I shall be justified," [Job xiii. 18], gave him grace to utter the triumphant assurance, "I *know* that *my* Redeemer liveth."

When we think of Job's happy confidence, ought we to rest satisfied with the grain of mustard-seed faith? With more light than Job had, and more helps than Job had, and more promises than Job had, and a firmer warrant than Job had, shall we

neglect to reach the height of assurance that Job expressed in our text? Oh, what a weakener is sin! Oh, how stunting is worldliness! The members of the Christian Church are like the poor miners in colliery districts. There are few that have not some malformation, or some impeded growth, owing to the early and long continued life in the depths of the earth. We need to take our eyes off the world and to fix them full on Jesus to have full assurance. The seal of the Spirit cannot be well defined when the heart is wavering and unsteadfast. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." And how is the Spirit grieved? By our looking away from Jesus. It is "he that believeth on the Son of God (that) hath the witness in himself."

III. Notice, thirdly, *the patriarch's resurrection prospects.*

The question was asked long afterwards, Shall the dust praise Thee? Job would have answered, Yes, it *shall*! The very dust of the saints shall through eternity praise its redeeming God and proclaim His truth.

The holy patriarch was clearly inspired to take up the language of the Church's creed; "I BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY."

No doubtful meaning of any one or two words can efface from the passage the doctrine of the resurrection. "Though after my skin worms destroy *this body*, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I

shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another (or stranger) eye." He declares that he will preserve his own personal identity both in body and soul. "I shall see Him for myself, not only in soul but in my flesh; I myself shall see Him and not a stranger."

This prophetic resurrection prospect of Job's was so understood by the early Christians, that it was a common tradition that he had the honour of rising out of his grave at the Saviour's resurrection, when we are told in St. Matthew, "many bodies of the saints arose." The tradition has this use, it shows the view that the early Church took of Job's prophecy. And in some of the ancient Greek versions of the Book of Job there is an addition to what we find in the Hebrew, which closes with the words, "So Job died, being old, and full of days." There is this addition. *But it is written, that he shall rise again with those whom the Lord raiseth up.* With words like these appended to Greek translations before the coming of Christ, we see that it was commonly considered that the Book of Job clearly set forth the doctrine of the resurrection.

And this glorious resurrection prospect of the patriarch is also found in chapter xiv. In verse 12 Job speaks of men lying down and rising not, "*till the heavens be no more.*" Groaning under the pressure of his grief, he cries out, "Oh, that Thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that Thou wouldest keep me secret till Thy wrath be past." But this

is only negative comfort. It is merely the cessation of suffering, and he continues his cry, "Oh, that Thou wouldest appoint me a set time and remember me!" He cannot bear the thought of always lying in the dust, even though it is a secure hiding-place from earth's storms. He would not be forgotten there. He would have a time set at the end of which God might remember him. He asks, "If a man die, shall he live?" and evidently answering himself, "Yes, he shall live again," he calmly adds, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come." It is a resurrection-change he looks for. He knows how precious in God's eyes is the dust of His saints. (Verse 15.) "Thou shalt call and I will answer thee. Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands." Thus the patriarch was given bright resurrection prospects, and, like Paul, he received illumination to say of the Redeemer, "He shall change our vile body." "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." "*In my flesh shall I see God.*" And this is the proper hope of the universal Church. Redemption is incomplete without resurrection of the body. The day of the redemption of our bodies will be the day of the complete accomplishment of our salvation, as then only shall we fully enter on the complete possession of the children of God. *In Jesus* our redemption was perfected when on the cross He cried, "It is finished," but *in us* it is perfected by *degrees*. The first degree is in this life, when we

believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and are saved. The second degree is at death, when our souls are delivered from all sin, and their sanctification is complete, and they are received into the undefiled kingdom of glory. And the final stage of all is in *resurrection*, when the glorified body shall be united to the glorified soul. And this is what St. Paul means in Rom. viii. 23. "Not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, *the redemption of our body.*"

Resurrection, then, is the Church's hope. It is a gladdening hope. It is a purifying hope. It comforts us when laying in the grave the earthly remains of those whom we loved. It cheers us when we feel the frailty of our own frame, and are reminded that it is but dust. It is not carnal to bend over the departed and long for the reanimation of the precious dust. It is scriptural. It is spiritual. Not only does the soul that filled that clay still live, but that clay itself shall be revived, and God hath encouraged His people to cry out for the perfected and manifested adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body. And in what language can we better express our faith and hope than that of Job? "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for

myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another!"

It is with these words that our ministers are directed to meet the funeral company at the entrance of the church-yard. If the Lord in His long-suffering seem to delay His return to a groaning world, so that your turn and mine do surely come for these words to be used for the benefit of *our* surviving friends, oh, may it be that our souls will then be enjoying the everlasting felicity of the believer's Kinsman-Redeemer in the realms of glory, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

Here the wicked one and his agents will never cease troubling, and here the weary will never have complete repose. Blessed, thrice blessed, are those who can say, "I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVETH, rest and glory will soon be mine."

VIII.

THE FIVEFOLD STATE.

“Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers. If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness : then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit : I have found a ransom. His flesh shall be fresher than a child's : he shall return to the days of his youth : he shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him : and he shall see his face with joy : for he will render unto man his righteousness.”—JOB xxxiii. 22-26.

HERE Elihu is led to speak of man in a state of ruin, man in a state of grace, man in a state of justification, man in a state of sanctification, and man in a state of glory. *A fivefold state.*

First, notice man *in a state of ruin.*

“His soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers.”

In Adam all die. In Adam sin entered into the world, and death by sin. The one word which best describes the natural heart is that of “*Ruin.*” A melancholy, dark, dismal, dreadful word, “*Ruin.*”

Think of Jerusalem's fair and beautiful temple in ruins, the abomination of desolation standing where it ought not. The ruin of the heart of man is that of a once far fairer and more beautiful temple. *Ichabod*, the glory is indeed departed.

But the thought conveyed to my mind in the words, "His soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers," is that of a ruin which is yet to be consummated. He is getting nearer and nearer to it. It is the ship getting every moment nearer the rocks of destruction. It is the blind man approaching nearer and nearer the fatal precipice. Or it is the wretch in the condemned cell to whom the executioners are coming; their steps are heard louder and louder, and already the bolts are being thrown back, and the key is unlocking the door. Or it is the dreadful room which gets smaller and smaller—slowly indeed, but very perceptibly—smaller and smaller, till the body is crushed to death.

But many, alas! are insensible to their danger and utter ruin. They are of unconverted men the most wretched. They are as a man travelling in a snow-storm. He wanders far from home and shelter. Every step he takes his feet sink the deeper in the drifted snow. A strange insensibility creeps over his mind. Death itself has lost its horrors. As his dangers increase, his fears diminish. A deep slumber is quickly descending on every faculty, till he *sinks* down quietly to sleep, but never to rise again.

Thus many a man's soul draws nigh to the grave, and his life to the destroyers.

Secondly, notice man *in a state of grace*.

"If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness." "*A Messenger*," Christ is the Messenger of the Covenant, the Declarer of the Father. "*An Interpreter*," Christ is the Interpreter, the true Joseph, the true Daniel, the true Revealer of secrets. "*One among a thousand*," Christ is the One among a thousand, yea, the chiefest among ten thousand. Of ten thousand friends, or ten thousand kings, or ten thousand leaders, or ten thousand commanders, or ten thousand physicians, He is the one to carry the banner and palm, He is the one to speak whilst all the others are silent, He is the one to be crowned whilst the rest cry, "Bow the knee," "Bow the knee." And, moreover, He who is the Messenger, the Interpreter, and One among a thousand, is also *the One to "show unto man His uprightness"*—His own spotless righteousness. *His* righteousness — Christ's own beautiful righteousness.

All this therefore shows us man in a state of grace. This Messenger, this Interpreter, this One among a thousand, is said to be *with* him—on his side; *for* him, not against him. If such an Angel Interpreter be our Mediator, who can condemn us? God in Christ can be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. If God be for us, who can be against us? The accuser of the brethren is silenced by our Ad-

vocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. It is marvellous grace which brings about so great a change. The soul that was very far off is brought very nigh through the one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus. Instead of fearing to come to God, we may say with David in Psalm xliii., "I will go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy," margin, *the joy of my joy*. Man in a state of grace has an Altar whereby he comes to God, and finds Him his joy of joys. With Christ for a Mediator, with Christ for our Messenger to God and Messenger from God, with Christ for our Interpreter, with Christ the One among a thousand chosen from among the people, and yet fairer than the children of men, with Christ revealing to us His righteousness, we see that when sin abounded grace hath much more abounded. If sin has reached to the highest mountain, grace has reached to the sky: "Thy mercy, O Lord, reacheth unto the heavens."

Next, we may notice man in *a state of justification*.

"Deliver him from going down into the pit, I have found a ransom, or atonement."

Christ came to give His life a ransom for many. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit," (Zech. ix. 11), words applied to Christ in Hebrews ix., "Christ by His own blood entered in *once into the holy place*, having obtained (literally,

having found,) eternal redemption (an eternal *ransom*) for us." The mediatorial office of the angel interpreter has brought him who before was subject to death through sin, into a state of justification and favour with God. "Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." We see here the blessedness of the justified. His blessedness consists in the satisfactory adjustment of his eternal interests. We know what satisfaction is felt when a man's temporal affairs are square and straight, every debt paid, every demand settled, every obligation provided for. There are *eternal* interests which we should have settled, and happy are those to whom the Lord imputeth no sin. Of every believer in Christ the word has gone forth, "Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." Everything is adjusted. There is, therefore, now no condemnation. Sometimes a man comes into the house of prayer, laden with transgression, and, as some would fear, drawing nigh to the destroyers. But he hears of the sinner's Surety, and he is led by God's Spirit to desire Him, to lay hold upon Him, and to make Him his own blessed ransomer, and lo, the angels rejoice as they hear the words, "Deliver *him* from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom."

Brethren, see that you enjoy the blessedness of the justified. Would that all here present could take up the Psalmist's words, "He hath brought me up out of the horrible pit, and set my feet upon the

rock, and established my goings, and put a new song into my mouth."

When God says, "I have found a ransom," He uses words which *we* may take up and employ to the praise of the glory of His grace. "I have found a ransom." What a burst of joy was there from the heart of the old Greek philosopher who had been labouring long and ineffectually to solve a difficult problem, when all at once light broke upon his mind, and he sprang from the bath and ran through the streets shouting, "Eureka! Eureka! I have found it! I have found it!" And if *his* emotion was so strong, with what deeper joy should the ruined sinner who has looked around in vain for help and deliverance view the Lord Jesus Christ as the ransom for his soul. "I have found a ransom in Christ, a ransom from the bottomless hell. Although like another Ahab I had sold myself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, I am emancipated and delivered from the body of this death. I am snatched as a brand from the fire. I am a pardoned man, I am a justified man, I am an accepted man, I am an adopted man, and when my strength faileth I shall be a glorified man by reason of the precious ransom that was given for me, and received for me, in the atonement of Him who gave His life a ransom for many."

My friends, I wish you all had found this ransom. In ordinary cases a great finding is a great rejoicing. *Harvey's* discovery of the circulation of the blood,

Newton's discovery of the law of gravitation, caused these men of science great joy. The discovery of a new continent by Columbus, the discovery of gold mines at different times by adventurers, caused great joy to the discoverers. But oh, what gratitude, what praise, ought the discovery to make in the soul, of having found a ransom for it, and such a ransom! The wealth of empires and the labour of ages amassed before you, would be infinitely insignificant compared with the price paid for our souls. Surely the longest life is too short for an adequate ascription of praise; surely the whole heart ought to become, as it were, a living lyre, all the strings vibrating with joy before the Lord! I have found in Christ an atonement for my soul. Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!

But, as I said, the words as they stand in the text are God's words, and they show that our justification is of God's grace. It is *God* who is gracious and saith, "Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." "It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." "We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness, that He might be just and the Justifier of him which beliveth in Jesus."

Fourthly, we may notice man in *a state of sanctification*. "His flesh shall be fresher than a child's. He shall return to the days of his youth. He shall

pray unto God, and He will be favourable unto him."

If any man be in Christ he is a new creature. He is born again. Old things have passed away, all things have become new. His condition is described as that of *the restored leper*. In the fifth of the second of Kings we read of Naaman dipping himself seven times in Jordan according to the saying of the man of God, and "his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." Leprosy was the type of sin. Hence we find such passages as these: Isa. i. 6, "The whole head is sick, the whole heart faint: from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." Psalm xxxviii, "My wounds stink and are corrupt. My loins are filled with a loathsome disease, and there is no soundness in my flesh." Leprosy shut out its wretched victim from all communion with the Church of God, and so the Israelitish maiden, speaking of Naaman, naturally used for the word which we have translated in our Bibles "*recovered*," one which literally means "*to gather together*;" *i.e.*, to receive into the camp. In Numbers xii. 15, the same word is used. Miriam was "*gathered* into the camp," that is, healed of her leprosy.

Oh, for a whole congregation of *Asaphs*, "*gathered*" unto Christ!

Look now at the text. "His flesh shall be fresher

than a child's. He shall return to the days of his youth. He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him."

The great Searcher of hearts has said that out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. The figure of leprosy then is not too loathsome to describe our fallen nature. But at conversion we are *gathered* unto Christ. The lepers are cleansed. We have spiritual intercourse with God. We have not to keep afar off. We pray, and faith sends up her empty vessel, and receives out of Christ's fulness and grace for grace. So youth is renewed as that of the eagles. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles: they shall run and not be weary: they shall walk and not faint."

This state of renovation and sanctification is ever the accompaniment of justification. When the condition is changed, the character is changed. Look at the beautiful butterfly. When it came from the egg it was a wriggling worm, bred in corruption, and crawling on the ground. Look at it after it has undergone its wonderful metamorphosis. In throwing off its old skin it divested itself of its old instincts and habits. The change within was in harmony with that without. It has left the ground and corruption and darkness, and risen a happy creature in the enjoyment of the bright sunshine. And just so those who are risen with Christ are

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called to live ascension lives, setting their affections on things above, and not on things of the earth.

They are Christ's alone.

"The earth hath lost its power to bind them downward. Henceforth their course is upwards, and right onward to yonder throne."

In saying this, however, we must remark that the state of sanctification is not an unvarying one as is that of justification. Called to be saints, called to be holy as Christ is holy, called to be partakers of holiness, Christians will nevertheless have much to mourn over while they are here on earth. They will not be exempt from the *conflict* described in Romans vii., or the "agonising" to enter the strait gate, set forth in the Sermon on the Mount; or the *holy war*, referred to in the 6th of Ephesians; or the *race* described in Philippians iii. and Hebrews xii.; or the *mortification* of the members upon the earth, and the *crucifixion* of the old man of which St. Paul speaks. Satan never loses his prey without a struggle. What a picture of his malignity we have in the 9th of St. Mark! There we are told of a man who brought his son to Christ to be dispossessed of the evil spirit, and straightway the spirit tare him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed foaming. Jesus said to the agonised father, "If thou canst believe all things are possible." And the father of the child cried out, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief." Then Jesus rebuked the foul spirit, "*Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him,*

and enter no more into him. And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead : insomuch that many said, He is dead." But Jesus lifted him up, and he arose. Thus the evil spirit, knowing that his time is come, gathers up his full strength to oppose the triumphs of the blessed Saviour ; but the same Jesus is by to take us by the hand and lift us up. "When men are cast down," said Eliphaz to Job, "then thou shalt say *There is lifting up*, and he shall save the humble person."

Happy are those who have passed from a state of ruin into a state of grace, and a state of justification, and a state of sanctification ; but no one will have reason to be satisfied with his progress in sanctification whilst here below.

A friend of Archbishop Usher repeatedly urged him to write his thoughts on *sanctification*, which he at length engaged to do. A long time elapsed, and the archbishop replied, "I have not written, and yet I cannot charge myself with a breach of promise, for I began to write ; but when I began to treat of the new creature, which God forms by His own Spirit, I found so little of it wrought in myself that I could speak of it only as parrots or by rote ; and, therefore, I durst not presume to proceed any further upon it."

His friend, who knew his holy character, was amazed. The bishop added, "We do not understand what sanctification and the new creature are.

It is no less than for a man to be brought to an entire resignation of his own will to the will of God, and to live to the offering up of his soul continually in the flames of love, as a whole burnt-offering to Christ."

In the fifth place, our text shows us the believer
• *in a state of glory.*

"He shall see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness."

The expression "He shall see his face" is eastern. We have it in Revelation xxii. 4, "They shall see his face." That is, they shall have the highest place of honour in the kingdom, the innermost circle. They shall stand in the immediate presence of the great king. This corresponds with Esther i. 14, "The seven princes who *saw the king's face*, and which sat first in the kingdom;" and to 2 Kings xxv. 19, "Five men of them who *saw the king's face*." The believer's heaven cannot be better described than in the words of the text, "He shall see His face with joy: for He will render unto man his righteousness."

He shall see His face with joy. He shall see, not the marred and careworn face of the outcast of Nazareth, but the holy glorious face of the King of heaven in His beauty. "He shall see His face," and find in His presence fulness of joy. He shall see His face. We have all seen His hand. *That is seen in creation, seen in the green valleys, seen in the lofty mountains, seen in the mighty ocean, seen*

in the rolling stars of night, seen all around us, seen in providence, seen in history, seen in the rise and fall of nations, seen in the overturning of dynasties; yes, we have all seen His hand.

But His *face*—the face of the King in His beauty—this is the promise, “*He shall see His face with joy.*” It was such a promise that made David exclaim, “As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness.” It is said of the temple of Diana, that it was so splendidly decorated with gold, and so bright and shining, that a porter at the door always said to every one that entered, “Take heed to your eyes that you be not struck with blindness.” But oh, the view of glory—the great vision of God! To see the righteous shining as the sun, but more than all to see God face to face and live! I shall see His face in righteousness, and shall be satisfied. “Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face.”

Long, long ago Moses prayed, “I beseech thee, show me Thy glory,” but he was not able to sustain such a vision. Sinful dust and ashes cannot. But under the power of God’s Holy Spirit we may ask to see God’s glory in His works, in His ways, in His dispensations, in His ordinances now; and in the world to come we shall “see His face with joy: for He shall render unto man his righteousness.”

Thus we have been led from the words of our text to consider what may be called the Gospel ac-

according to Elihu—1st, Man in a state of ruin. We all know what *that* is. 2dly, Man in a state of grace. May you all know *that*. 3dly, Man in a state of justification. May you all know *that*. 4thly, Man in a state of sanctification. May you all know *that*. 5thly, Man in a state of glory. May you all know the meaning of *that*.

“Now to Him that is able to keep us from falling, and present us faultless *in the presence of His glory with exceeding joy*: to the only wise God our Saviour; be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen, Amen.”

IX.

SONGS IN THE NIGHT.

"None saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night."—JOB xxxv. 10.

Songs in the night. He who inhabiteth the praises of Israel and the praises of eternity, receives unceasing praises from the celestial hosts,

"Who all night long unwearied sing,
High praise to their eternal King."

And in this lower world He who teacheth the nightingale its music, will not let His saints be dumb. He giveth to His trusting children songs in the night, sweet songs of tranquillity and joy.

This is *literally* the case.

Hear the sweet singer of Israel harping with his harp in the 119th Psalm: "I have remembered Thy name, O Lord, in the night." Again, "At midnight I will rise to give thanks to Thee." In Psalm lxxiii, he says, "My mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips, when I remember Thee upon my

bed, and meditate upon Thee in the night-watches." And again in Psalm xlii., he says, "In the night season HIS song shall be with me." Such time redeemed from sleep was to David an antepast of the heavenly service.

Turning to another example, we find, in the 16th of the Acts, two saints to whom were given songs in the night. "At midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God, and the prisoners heard them." It was as dark a night as ever Paul and Silas knew, but they were filled with divine consolations and sang praises to God.

There is also the most affecting of all examples of songs in the night. It is that of Christ's hymn with His disciples on the night of His betrayal. Truly man, Christ's soul was exceeding sorrowful, but, full of holy peace, He left not the upper chamber for Gethsemane, and Gabbatha, and Calvary, without uniting in a hymn of praise.

But besides taking the words literally, they undoubtedly admit of a larger and a somewhat figurative application.

In the night season of affliction God giveth songs to His people. In chapter xxxiv. Elihu asks, "When God giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" The true Christian knows *Whom* he has believed. He knows in Whose hands are all the events of his life. An affliction is sudden to him, but not to God. All its aggravating circumstances *have been long pre-arranged by Him.* Who then

can make trouble? The world is mighty at making trouble, Satan is mighty at making trouble, the old Adam nature is mighty at making trouble, death is mighty at making trouble, but when God giveth quietness, *who* can make trouble? "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever."

In the night hours of affliction God giveth songs to His people. In the night season of poverty, in the night season of bereavement, in the night season of persecution, in the night season of sickness, in the night season of death.

(1.) Hear one in the *night hours of poverty*.

Richard Williams, the Patagonian Missionary, said, when dying of hunger, "I have no longer a choice, when I know His holy will." It was thus God gave him a song in the night. Take another case. A Christian man who had been rich, was asked how he could bear the poverty that had come upon him. He said, "When I was rich I had God in everything, and now I am poor I have everything in God." It was thus God gave him songs in the night. Another who had struggled hard through life without repining, was asked the secret of his uniform happiness. He said, "In whatsoever state I am, I first look up to heaven, and remember that my principal business here is to get there. I then look down upon the earth, and call to mind how small a space of it I shall occupy after death. Lastly, I look abroad upon the world and observe how many there are

more unhappy than myself." It was thus God gave him songs in the night.

(2.) Turn next to those in the dark night of *bereavement*.

Job's own case furnishes us with one of the God-given songs in the night. "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." *David* was given one of those songs, "While the child was yet alive I fasted and wept, for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious unto me that the child may live? But now that he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I may go to him, but he cannot return to me." It was thus God gave *David* songs in the night of bereavement.

And so multitudes of stricken ones have received comfort, and been taught songs in the night. When they think of their own sorrows which the departed have escaped, and their own conflicts which the departed have been spared, and their repentings over recent sins which the departed in their sinless state can never know more, and when they think—

" We have seen Christ but dimly,
By faith and not by sight ;
But *they* have seen Him clearly,
In everlasting light !"—

then they take up the words, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, yea, saith the Spirit," and yea, saith their souls. Thus in bereavement's

dark night of anguish God giveth songs of consolation.

(3.) In the night season of *persecution* God giveth songs.

The noble army of martyrs have been right joyous with their songs in the night. Some of the holiest and sweetest songs have been sung by the Church in her seasons of severest persecution. We hear three devoted ones saying, "If it be so, our God Whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace." We read of the apostles "rejoicing to suffer shame for Christ." We read of men who took joyfully the spoiling of their goods for Christ. In the dreadful persecutions under Nero, Domitian, Trojan, Antonius, Servitus, Maximus, Decius, Valerian, Aurelian, and Diocletian, God gave joy and peace to His suffering saints which nothing could take away. And in all the persecutions which the Papal community has inflicted—and her history is written in blood—God has given His suffering servants songs in the night. And again, in the persecutions of recent times, as those of the Christians of Madagascar, we find how truly God, my Maker, giveth songs in the night.

(4.) In the fourth place we may notice that God giveth songs *in the night of sickness*.

Calvin upon a sick-bed said, "Lord, thou crushest me, but it is enough to know that it is thy hand." Charles Simeon on a sick-bed said, "Why do you ask me what I like? I am the Lord's

patient, and cannot but like everything that He likes." Thomas Boston said, "I would lie against my own soul if I should deny that I would rather have a cross of God's choosing for me, than a crown of my own choosing for myself." Thus in the night of sickness God giveth songs—*subdued* songs, but still songs, and songs in the night season.

When the inspired Psalmist sings of the night service in the temple, "Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which by *night* stand in the house of the Lord;" have we not asked—

"But who shall praise God in the night?
The night that lays her finger on the lips of men,
And hushes them to something like the calm of death?"

There are many to throng the temple courts in the day-time, but who shall bless His name at midnight?

The Lord's people are called to be "priests unto God." All believers are priests, and the priests must serve in turn, each in his course. "Whilst we are sleeping, those to whom the King has measured out a cup of sorrow, sweet with His dear love, yet very hard to drink, are waking in His temple, and the eyes that cannot sleep for sorrow or for pain are lifted up to heaven, and sweet low songs, broken by patient tears, arise to God."¹

As the priests of old served at night, each in his course, so now God at times calls His priests, each

¹ B. M.

in turn, to bless His name in the night season of sickness, and HE giveth them songs.

(5.) In the fifth place, we may notice that God giveth songs in the night of *death*.

The turning of Israel's captivity spoken of in Isaiah xxxv. 10, expresses also a spiritual truth applicable to the departure of God's Israel now. "The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." The Christian may be said to be in captivity now, a prisoner of hope. But he shall not always be in exile. Kept by the power of God he shall return home with songs and everlasting joy. Now the songs of the believer are often mingled with sighs and groans, but no harsh discordant notes will mar the new-born anthem. He shall sweep no strings that jar. Sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

As we pass down into the valley of the shadow of death it is not likely that we shall all have *Payson's* glowing rapture, "The celestial city is full in my view. Its glories beam upon me, its breezes fan me, its odours are wafted to me, its sounds strike upon mine ear, its spirit is breathed into my heart." But He who giveth songs in the night will assuredly help His dying saints to say, "Though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." An eminent servant of God, during the last three years of his life, very frequently

quoted a quaint verse, which every disciple might well learn by heart—

“When I’m to die, receive me, I’ll cry,
For Jesus has loved me—I cannot tell why;
But this I can find, we two are so join’d,
He’ll not be in glory and leave me behind.”

It is well to prepare for the *last* night season.

(6.) But, sixthly, there is a night to which I have made no reference. I have said God giveth songs in the dark night of poverty, and in the night of bereavement, and in the night of persecution, and in the night of sickness, and in the night of death; these amply show that God, my Maker, giveth songs in the night. There is, however, another kind of night, I mean *the time of felt darkness on account of sin*. Satan is the prince of darkness, and he would keep us all in blackness and darkness for ever if he could. When, through the power of God’s Spirit, a soul is led to lament the darkness of sin, it is as the conflict of two kingdoms, that of darkness and that of light, but the end, by the grace of God, must ever be a morning without a cloud.

When we think of ourselves, the weakness of our hearts, the corruption of our nature, and the might of the devil, we have cause for fear and trembling, but God, my Maker, giveth songs in the night. “Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God. *Speak ye comfortably unto Jerusalem, and cry unto*

her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." In Christ the Surety, sin is put away, and the warfare is accomplished, for when Christ covers the head in the day of battle, victory is as sure as if we were already in glory. God therefore commands even weak believers to take the comfort due to their position. Some say it is dangerous to be happy. God says, "Comfort ye, comfort ye." If your joy flow from Calvary's cross you cannot have too much of it. Rejoice in the Lord alway. God would not have His people low-spirited, so He giveth songs in the night. Dejection is very often owing to man's attempt to add to Christ's finished work. This is to mar the perfection and beauty of that work. "If thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it."

To those who feel that the present is a time of darkness because of sin, I say Christ is the light of life, and as truly as Christ brought Israel out of dark Egypt, He is ready to bring *you* forth with the language of Isaiah xxx. 29, "Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the Lord." And what David said, *you* may soon say, "He compasseth me about with songs of deliverance." On *all* sides God vouchsafes deliverances, and at all times therefore there should be songs of thankfulness for those deliverances.

Thus in many ways God may be said to give songs in the night.

I must now ask you to notice that the text sets the Lord God before us under two titles.

First He is called, "my Maker." Some persons use this as if it were a cold and powerless title. The despiser of revelation even will speak of his "*Maker*." The Christian, however, must set great value upon this word. The argument for God's all-merciful providence in Psalm 139, rests upon David's remembrance that God was his Maker. "I will praise Thee, *for* I am wonderfully and fearfully made." God's people know that their Maker will have a desire to the work of His hands. "It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves." Regeneration is also His, "We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works." The author of a beautiful book, the painter of a fine picture, and the inventor of some valuable machinery, will have a desire to the work of their hands. The laws of copyright and patents, not to say common experience, will show *that*. When, therefore, God is described as "my Maker," should it not call forth from my inmost soul love, and confidence, and gratitude? Should it not make me desire that body, mind, and spirit may be holy unto the Lord? Remember the Psalmist's beautiful plea, "Thy hands have made me, give me understanding that I may learn Thy commandments."

Another title given of God is most striking.

He is called God, "*Who giveth songs in the night.*" This is a title which seems to have wrapped up in it many of those of the New Testament, such as, the God of hope, the God of patience, the God of peace, the Father of mercies, the God of all grace, the God of consolation.

We never read of the Israelites singing till they were ransomed from Egypt, and God never gives songs till there has come salvation. When, therefore, we say He giveth songs in the night, it is as if we took in the whole of the Church's creed, I believe in God Who made me, I believe in Christ Who redeemed me, I believe in the Holy Ghost Who sanctifieth me, and all the elect people of God. Without Christ crucified, or without the Holy Spirit, there could be no songs in the night. But God "my Maker," is also God in Christ, therefore He giveth songs in the night. What a title have we here ! "Gather together all the philosophers of antiquity, Plato, Socrates, Aristotle. Bring together the wise men of Greece, the philosophers of Alexandria, the sages of Rome. Ask if their combined and collected wisdom could give songs in the night of affliction." When did they ever comfort the widow and orphan ? when did they ever light up the dark valley of the shadow of death ? when did they ever relieve the woe of the man who felt sin a burden ?

It is only He who gave Christ Jesus who can give songs in the night. As all music has its groundwork, its elementary principles, so has the music of

the believing soul. JESUS is the basis of the music of night, and when we know HIM there is not a single midnight in our history, for which God does not provide a song.

I pass on to notice *the complaint* that is made in the text. "None saith, Where is God, my Maker, Who giveth songs in the night?" *None* saith! These are sad words. Probably we must take them, not absolutely, but relatively, not as affirming that positively no one inquired for God, but as declaring that they were few in number, as our Lord said, "Few there be that find it." Is it not strange that with men's desire for happiness, few seek it where it is to be found? few say, Where is God, my Maker, who giveth songs in the night? No one is half in earnest, "*None* saith as he should, Where is God, my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?"

I address some who lament that they have not the consolations of the gospel. What are you to do? Ask God for them. They are His free gift. He *giveth* songs in the night. As the blood-bought harp in heaven is tuned and strung by power divine, so now songs of the night are God's gift. He *giveth* songs in the night. Place your harp in His hands, all broken and unstrung as it is, and He will repair it and retune it, and breathe His Spirit upon it, and touch it with Calvary's gentle hand, and call forth the music that you long for. He *giveth* songs in the night. He can make you look up through your *tears* and say, "At midnight will I rise to bless

thee, O Lord, I, even I, in my season of darkness and sorrow, will take my place amongst those who by night stand in the house of the Lord to praise the Lord."

The text speaks of *night*. Christian brethren, it will not always be night. In heaven there is no night, no night of sorrow, no night of poverty, no night of bereavement, no night of persecution, no night of sickness, no night of death, no night of sin and its consequences. "There shall be no night there." The subdued songs of night will soon be exchanged for the rapturous songs of the eternally cloudless day. Yet a little, and then the new song in the new Jerusalem before the throne of Him who makes all things new. Meanwhile, as God's children are going through unwonted and bitter trials, it is affecting to see with what royal tenderness God stoops to comfort them. As a parent that conveyed his children in a flight by night, from a savage foe, would whisper to first one and then another sweet words of assurance, sometimes lifting up and even carrying the weakly, and encouraging them all, and saying, "It will soon be light, hold on, my brave children, we shall soon be through," so God hovers about His children in their adversity, saying, "Be of good cheer, I have not gone from you, and because I live ye shall live also." "So He giveth songs in the night."

I know it is *night* with some of you, and I would that you could enter into the spirit of Henry

Martyn's words, "Whenever I can say, Thy will be done, it is like throwing ballast out of an air balloon, my soul ascends immediately, and light and happiness shine around me." We all want more of Habakkuk's trust, "Although the fig-tree blossom not *yet* I will rejoice in the Lord." Or that of David, "Although my house be not so with God, *yet* hath he made with me an everlasting covenant." May the Lord give us to know more of such "*Yets*." I love those "*Yets*."

It is said that when birds are migrating, they require a wind that blows *against* them in order to make progress and keep their elevation, for it assists in raising them. So the soul of the Christian winging its way to the better world should be aided, not impeded, by the contrary winds of trial. Sorrows are the echoes of God's word, which says, "Forgetting the things behind." We are to leave behind earth's empty dreams, and vain desires, and unbelieving griefs, and heavy cares, and heavier sins; we are to leave behind the darkness, and the shadow-land, and press forward to the realms of glory.

As in reading the Book of Psalms, on getting nearly to the end you come to fifteen "songs of degrees," or "songs of steps," corresponding with the number of the steps to the temple, as if to direct the singer to rise higher and get nearer, so the Christian is to abound in ascension odes, and an *ascension spirit*, and an ascension character, as he

gets nearer the land of the morning, where there shall be no night and no temple, for the Lamb shall be the everlasting light, and God shall be the glory, and then ! oh *then* ! for the songs of day !

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